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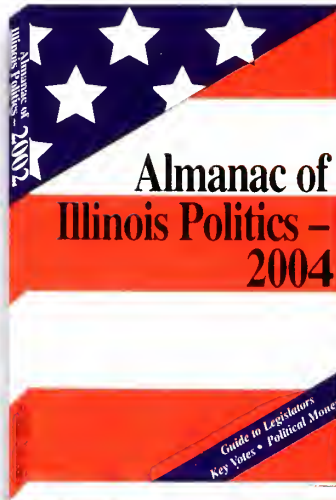
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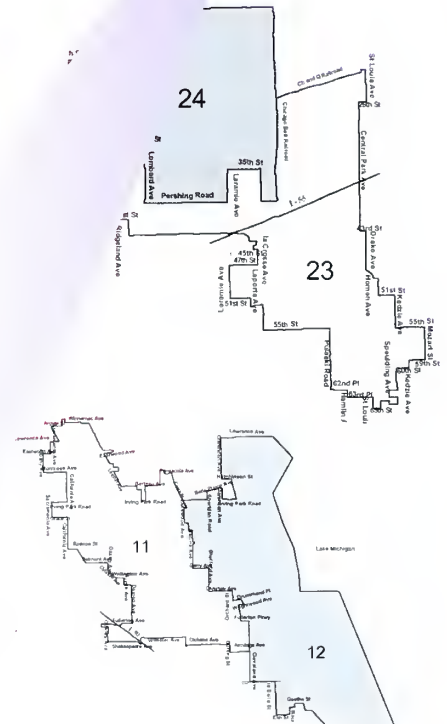
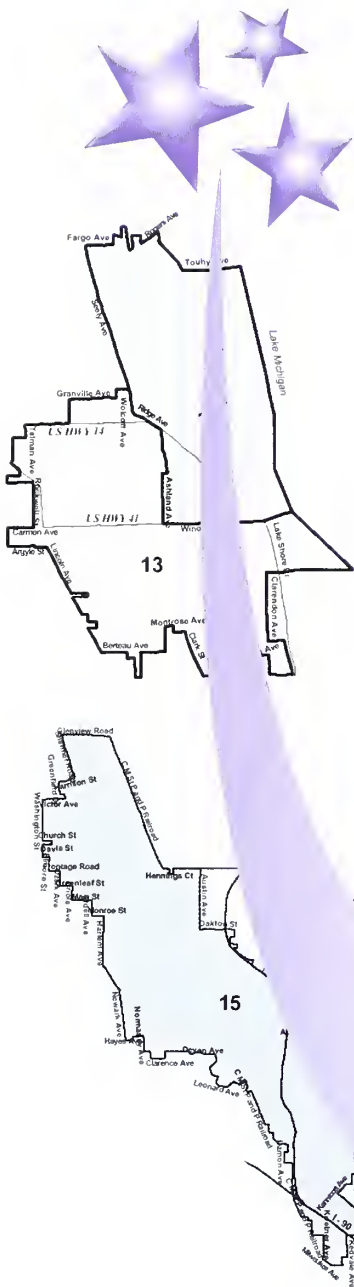
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*Peggy Boyer Long*



## We have only ourselves to blame if the budget is a dry hole and the rhetoric is hot

by Peggy Boyer Long

**H**ard to believe. A few years back, state leaders mailed property tax "rebates" to homeowners. They gave motorists a pass on the sales tax at the pump and scattered thousands, no millions, of state dollars across Illinois' myriad towns and hamlets so locals could dedicate statues, decorate

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### The Price of Government: Getting the Results We Need in an Age of Permanent Fiscal Crisis

by David Osborne

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Oddly, though, as our Statehouse reporters called in nonprogress bulletins from the political front, Osborne and Hutchinson grew more interesting, like a pair of unexpected

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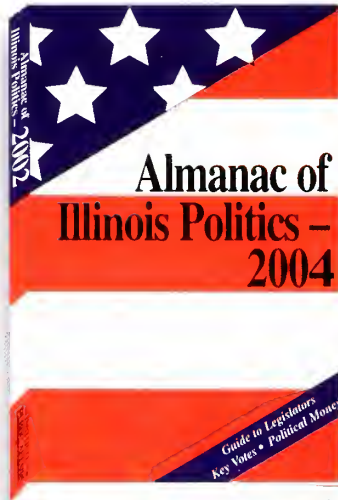
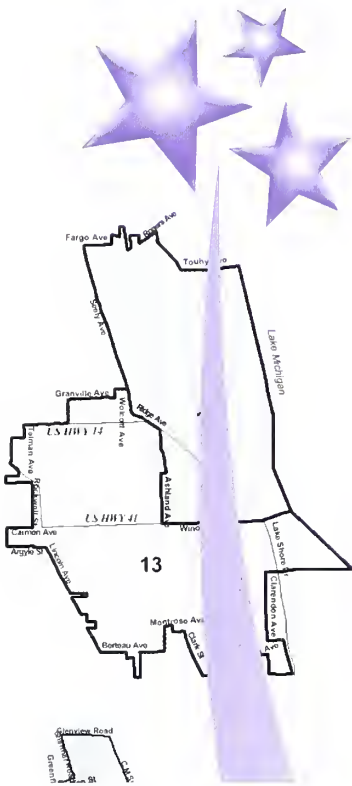




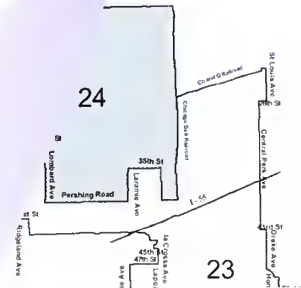
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Peggy Boyer Long



## We have only ourselves to blame if the budget is a dry hole and the rhetoric is hot

by Peggy Boyer Long

**H**ard to believe. A few years back, state leaders mailed property tax “rebates” to homeowners. They gave motorists a pass on the sales tax at the pump and scattered thousands, no millions, of state dollars across Illinois’ myriad towns and hamlets so locals could dedicate statues, decorate parking garages and deliver tutus to tiny ballerinas. It was quite a time.

These days, with a deficit running in the billions, our leaders have turned to selling bonds, pushing off obligations and squeezing public services. And, to paraphrase University of Illinois political scientist Christopher Mooney, they’ve resorted to looking under couch cushions for stray coins. About the only thing they haven’t considered is hiking general taxes. Well, they haven’t asked for those rebates back, either.

Some argue our elected officials are begging, borrowing and stealing — from our futures. Which, of course, they are. Come to think of it, that’s also what they were doing a few years back.

We can’t afford to point fingers, though. Politics Illinois-style is geared to spend ’em if you’ve got ’em. All of us want that free lunch. None of us is fighting to pick up the check.

And our political leaders do pretty much what we ask, or what we allow,

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### The Price of Government: Getting the Results We Need in an Age of Permanent Fiscal Crisis

by David Osborne  
and Peter Hutchinson  
*Basic Books, 2004*

despite our professed irritation with name-calling and self-serving platitudes — “making the hard choices” being merely this year’s most annoying. Politics Illinois-style is geared for this, too.

We have only ourselves to blame if the budget is a dry hole and the rhetoric is hot.

So in the final hours of last month, as the legislative session careened toward overtime, it seemed appropriate to hunker down with a copy of *The Price of Government*, the new “here’s how they really should do it” treatise on public budgeting written by David Osborne, of *Reinventing Government* fame, and consultant Peter Hutchinson.

Fair warning: Even in milder political climes these guys could appear a bit off kilter. In the context of Illinois politics, especially end-of-gridlocked-

session Illinois politics, they sound as if they’re living in some parallel universe.

Oddly, though, as our Statehouse reporters called in nonprogress bulletins from the political front, Osborne and Hutchinson grew more interesting, like a pair of unexpected visitors sharing hard-to-believe tales from exotic cultures. Places where patronage hardly exists, unions are cooperative and civil service doesn’t obstruct. Where politics actually can mean subtraction, and where government increasingly is a do-it-yourself enterprise. Where services are so carefully calibrated there’s little if any waste, and no one has to make multiple copies. Where taxes are high enough, but not too high. And ditto for spending. That’s the general idea, anyway.

To get there, we consumers — sorry, citizens — and our elected officials will need to decide together what kind of government we want and what we’re willing to pay for it. In other words, we should set priorities and jettison the rest. We’ll need a Mission Statement, of course, and a short list of achievable goals.

Osborne and Hutchinson cite Washington state and the Minnesota school system as positive role models. (I’m not

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sure either has been to Illinois. The Land of Lincoln gets a big mention, though, for a massive bonding program. But not in a positive role-model sense.)

After getting past the image of Illinoisans gathering in mass strategic planning sessions — and setting aside the notion that we might never be ready for a right-sized, benchmarked state government — we can glean some useful suggestions from this book.

The concept of planning ahead, for instance. Osborne and Hutchinson, who assert that we've entered an era in which fiscal crisis will be a permanent feature, suggest governments plan at least five years out. Six would be better.

It is worth noting that, roughly speaking, Illinois' fiscal ups and downs do tend to track on five-year cycles. Most recently, the economy was down in the mid-'80s, up, then down in the late-'80s, back up in the mid-'90s and down again about three years back.

Of course, Illinois politicians tend to follow election cycles, not economic cycles. (And some are more attuned to news cycles.) Still, a little smoothing out of the ups and downs shouldn't be all that difficult. Perhaps we could have passed on the tutus.

The authors also suggest that it's always smarter to make allies, not enemies. And they have no kind words for politicians who campaign, let alone govern, against the institutions they say they want to lead — or those who blame others for problems.

In a section titled "First, tell the truth," they write: "Without a grip on the facts — even the brutal facts — leaders fall back on unwarranted hopes or outright deception. If you don't have a grip, you shouldn't be leading."

In fact, Osborne and Hutchinson identify seven "deadly deceptions" in budgeting, all designed to push final fiscal reckoning into the future.

- Rob Peter to pay Paul. This involves mining special accounts to boost general operating funds. The authors note such raids can "make the budget look better this year, but the

same hole will reappear next year, when Peter and Paul will both be worse off."

- Use accounting tricks that slide billings and/or payments between fiscal years.

- Borrow. Illinois gets that big mention for issuing \$10 billion in bonds last year to help "fix" the state's operating budget. The success of that strategy is predicated on higher investment returns on a portion of the proceeds. The authors note that while one expert calls it risk arbitrage, "others might call it just plain foolish."

- Sell off assets. Again, this is a one-time plug.

- Nickle and dime employees. This doesn't save much and is bad for morale.

- Delay maintenance.

And, my personal favorite:

- Make something up. All budgets, are, after all, based on assumptions.

The authors also suggest a dozen nondeceptive ways to provide fiscal first aid. Among them: require unpaid employee furloughs; close tax loopholes; encourage early retirement; refinance existing bonds at lower interest rates. And, they argue, "there is nothing wrong with prudent borrowing for capital projects that will provide jobs and stimulate the economy, particularly during a recession."

The authors suggest the states could do something else: modernize their tax systems. Most states, for example, tax few or no services, which now account for almost 60 percent of consumer spending. This issue has been a nonstarter in Illinois, too.

But these authors say it's not a math problem, it's a leadership problem.

And that's where we come in: We can grab the goodies while we can, then complain when we have to give them up. Or we can think through what we want — and, yes, what we're willing to pay.

We can decide, too, whether to punish clear thinking from our leaders or reward empty political rhetoric. □

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# Illinois Issues

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June 2004

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*Patrick J. Guinane*



## The legislature is by no means Gov. Rod Blagojevich's lone straw man

by Pat Guinane

**G**ov. Rod Blagojevich announced the biggest compromise of his tenure in a way only he could, by declaring victory. He left the proposed Department of Education, his “top legislative priority,” dead on the side of the road, accepted a stripped-down compromise and declared it a “sweeping education reform agreement.”

If only his efforts at persuasion were as graceful as that conciliatory acceptance. Instead, Blagojevich has built a poor reputation by dragging the legislature — and plenty of others — through the mud whenever it has been politically expedient, a tactic that worked early on but now threatens to limit his effectiveness and marginalize his role in the state Democratic Party.

Often inflammatory, the governor's rhetoric hasn't changed much in 17 months. Even before his inauguration, Blagojevich promised to upset “entrenched interests” in Springfield. Since then, he's made it clear the legislature is on that list. Shortly after taking office, he said lawmakers should pass on free tickets to University of Illinois sporting events and stop handing out legislative scholarships, perks he took advantage of during his four years in the House. When they offered gambling as a fix for his first budget, he was noncommittal for months, only to rebuke the idea at a Chicago press conference held while the legislature toiled in Springfield.

*But George Ryan's tenure  
is long past and the federal  
government is far away.  
And Blagojevich's  
mantra is wearing thin.*

“I think the governor should be here, but it serves his purpose not to be here,” Sen. Denny Jacobs said at the time. “He's the good guy; we're the bad guys. He's been painting that picture for quite some time.”

That was before the November veto session, when Blagojevich called legislators “drunken sailors” on a “pending orgy.” At the time, the House and Senate had only begun considering his spending vetoes, meaning neither chamber had added a dime to the budget he authorized that summer.

The legislature is by no means Blagojevich's lone straw man. Former Gov. George Ryan, whom he criticized for corruption and fiscal irresponsibility, was a frequent foil during Blagojevich's first year. And the federal government, primarily for its stance against importing Canadian prescription drugs, has been a consistent target.

But Ryan's tenure is long past and the

federal government is far away. And Blagojevich's mantra is wearing thin.

Initially, his most ardent legislative critics were Republicans, who were muted by their minority status in the House and Senate. But this year, Blagojevich's free pass with members of his own party expired, and he was unable to get a budget or any major legislative initiatives approved before the May 31 session deadline.

He hadn't expected that sort of acrimony from fellow Democrats. At least that's what he said during his pre-inaugural barbecue. On the day he sent a warning shot to Springfield's “entrenched interests,” Blagojevich was asked how he would get along with House Speaker Michael Madigan and Senate President Emil Jones.

“I fully anticipate a cooperative effort,” he said. “After all, we are members of the same political party.”

With his second budget plan treading water only days before June and Democrats in disagreement on everything from gun control to education, Blagojevich was again asked how he thought governing would go with his party controlling the legislature. “Frankly I thought it would be harder,” Blagojevich said, launching into a three-minute response in which he cited “the worst budget deficit in Illinois state history,” twice mentioned “misplaced priorities” and reiterated his pledge to avoid tax



increases. Those elements were in place before he took office. What changed?

The difference appears to be discord with Speaker Madigan, a fellow Chicago Democrat who has served in the General Assembly since 1971.

The two may have always moved along different ideological paths, with Madigan taking a more long-term perspective, but when or why an impasse might have occurred remains unstated. In fact, the speaker hasn't spoken with reporters much at all in the past two years. But he did accept an April 12 invitation to Southern Illinois University's Public Policy Institute, where, answering audience questions, he sketched out some of his thinking.

Madigan made headlines expressing concern over the administration's penchant for borrowing, citing the \$10 billion pension bond deal Blagojevich used to free up \$2 billion in operating dollars his first year. This year, the governor has proposed borrowing another \$4.2 billion to build roads and schools but has made no attempt to identify new revenue streams to finance the debt.

Madigan also expressed support for a temporary income tax increase but downplayed it by saying Blagojevich's opposition to tax hikes means "it's not going to happen."

For his part, Blagojevich routinely shrugs off criticism from the legislature, calling it "part of the process." But the day after Madigan's speech, Blagojevich advised lawmakers to "take a deep breath," warning that budget negotiations would be a "titanic struggle." Some would argue we've yet to see the iceberg.

Sure, the waters got choppy, but the struggle isn't over. Both chambers have yet to agree upon a spending plan, or how to fund it. And there exists no capital plan to build schools or roads.

Meanwhile, Blagojevich has aligned himself with Senate President Jones. Yet even Jones has defied the governor, pushing a massive gambling expansion bill that would create a land-based, city-owned mega-casino for Chicago.

Jones also has used the Senate's "advice and consent" role on the governor's appointees to send Blagojevich periodic messages. Most recently, he

dumped a Blagojevich appointee to the Illinois Gaming Board who had voted against sending the state's dormant 10th casino license to Jones' south suburban region.

But those are minor squabbles compared to the titanic struggle shaping up between the governor and the speaker.

For weeks, the governor capitalized on Madigan's mere mention of an income tax hike. Whenever a Blagojevich budget ideal was questioned, the governor reminded reporters he was not in favor of the temporary income tax increase the speaker had never genuinely proposed.

All the while, Madigan held series after series of legislative hearings on Blagojevich's initiatives. The proceedings effectively crystalized opposition to the administration's borrowing practices, the proposed education takeover and a plan to dramatically alter the way the state pays private agencies that care for the developmentally disabled and mentally ill.

At the same time, the speaker took on another speaking engagement, this time in Springfield, as a guest of the business community. In addition to his previous concerns, Madigan directly addressed Blagojevich's second budget. The governor had just sent legislators a letter meant to buoy support for his plan and the \$400 million in business tax hikes it relied on for funding.

"The essence of the letter is in the form of a challenge," Madigan said. "It's a challenge to the legislature to either put up or shut up, to go along with his budget and go along with his fee increases or come up with a different way to do things." The speaker went on to explain that he would soon bring the governor's revenue pieces up for debate and, "thereafter, everybody, the governor and the legislature, will be in a position to decide if we can move forward with the governor's budget proposal or whether the governor will be called upon to come back and revise the budget proposal."

Four weeks later, while the other leaders met with the governor, Madigan called a bill that contained \$300 million of Blagojevich's business tax hikes. It failed by 37 votes.

Blagojevich was unwavering, rejecting talk of a "no-growth" budget that acknowledged aversion to his revenue

plan. He again implored legislators to make the "tough choices," which by then included raiding dozens of special purpose funds.

That week, Madigan also declined invitations to meet with the governor, a fact Blagojevich chose to downplay. On the final session day, Madigan met with the governor for the first time in more than a week. It didn't help. Hours later Blagojevich and President Jones announced a budget agreement without Madigan.

"Two out of three ain't bad," Blagojevich said. "It's better than Sammy Sosa's batting average, not as good as Michael Jordan's free-throw percentage."

The House adjourned that night before receiving the Senate budget. And now both chambers, Republicans too, have all summer to reach a compromise.

In contrast, the governor's education plan sped out of the House after Blagojevich capitulated on Madigan's opposition to creating an entirely new bureaucracy and handing teachers' unions a controlling vote over certification standards.

But not only has Blagojevich been unwilling to compromise on the major tenets of his budget, he potentially deepened his rift with Speaker Madigan by questioning the autonomy of his daughter, Attorney General Lisa Madigan, after she ruled against the governor's \$200 million mortgage of the Thompson Center.

Perhaps Blagojevich should step back and consider an assessment Speaker Madigan made 16 years ago, after blocking Gov. Jim Thompson's proposed income tax increase for the second consecutive spring session.

"Some people may not get everything they want. Some people may walk away and say they could have done more. They could have done better," Madigan said. "But that's not the nature of a legislative session, the nature of a legislative process. Never should anyone walk away and say I got everything I wanted. That's just not the nature of what we do."

By the way, Madigan orchestrated his own income tax increase the following year, earmarking the proceeds for schools and local governments so that Thompson never got to spend a cent. □

*Pat Guinane can be reached at  
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# BRIEFLY

## LEGI CHECKLIST

*The legislature missed a May 31st constitutional deadline for the spring session, meaning lawmakers will need to cobble together a three-fifths vote to approve a state budget for the fiscal year that begins July 1. They'll need that extra-majority, as well, for other legislation that has an immediate effective date. Legislators left Springfield but are out-call. Here's a run-down of action as of the first week of June.*

### ? Gambling

Senate President Emil Jones has yet to deliver the mega-casino Chicago Mayor Richard Daley desires, as a plan to nearly triple the scope of casino gambling didn't get a floor vote. In addition to a land-based, city-owned Chicago casino, the plan promises new riverboat licenses for Waukegan, Rockford and Chicago's south suburbs. The nine casino licenses already in operation could nearly double available casino positions and the state's five horse racetracks could add slots and video poker.

Initially, the plan could net the state up to \$1.8 billion, including \$350 million bids for each of the four new casino licenses. However, Gov. Rod Blagojevich promised to veto any Chicago casino, and Senate Republicans have resisted city ownership. The legislation cleared committee, and Senate Democrats haven't given up.

### ✓ Property taxes

In a move to ease soaring Cook County property tax bills, lawmakers approved a proposal to cap residential assessment increases at 7 percent a year. The three-year measure also boosts a number of tax breaks, most notably raising the popular homestead exemption to \$5,000 statewide.

Downstate lawmakers say the cap is too high to help residents in their districts, where assessments aren't increasing as rapidly. And many argue the cap and the expanded exemptions simply shift the tax burden onto businesses.

### ✓ Gun rights

Efforts to ease gun control laws received strong support in the legislature, but Gov. Blagojevich has said lawmakers are going in the wrong direction and promised "wholesale vetoes" if they don't also approve a state ban on assault weapons and tighten restrictions on handgun purchases.

Homeowners could avoid charges if they use a gun in self-defense, despite local ordinances prohibiting handgun ownership. Opponents say the measure undermines local control.

Both chambers tallied enough votes to override a veto of the self-defense bill.

Other gun bills still in the legislature would lower the gun permit age from 21 to 18, require trigger locks for handguns and force gun shows to run background checks on buyers.

### ✓ Sex offenders

Proposals backed by Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan that would tighten oversight of sexual predators have been sent to the governor.

Closing a state loophole, prosecutors could use DNA evidence in cases where rape victims died during the crime. Now, prosecutors can't use DNA evidence to prove a fatal rape if a report isn't filed within two years of the crime.

Sex offenders released from jail could be electronically monitored and subject to the Department of Corrections' strict rules about where they can live or work.

As a condition of a sex offender's release, police must update sex offenders' addresses and photographs published on the Illinois State Police's Web site.

Sex offenders convicted of murder would have to register for life. Current law only applies to murders committed since June 1996, which means the state police can't track parolees convicted of murder before that time.

### ✓ Meth

Lawmakers sent the governor three measures aimed at curbing the production of methamphetamine, a highly

addictive homemade stimulant.

Parents caught producing meth around their children could be charged with child abuse. Meth-makers who cause a fire or explosion that damages property or harms a person could face a felony and jail time of up to 50 years. And customers could only purchase two packages of cold medicine at one time, as part of an effort to reduce the availability of pseudoephedrine, a meth ingredient found in many over-the-counter remedies.

### ✓ Dropouts

Students will have to attend school from age 7 until 17 if the governor signs a bill approved by both chambers. Currently, students may drop out at age 16.

### ✓ Obesity

The legislature approved the Commonsense Consumption Act, a ban on fast food lawsuits. It generally applies to all junk food, protecting manufacturers, distributors, sellers and advertisers from being sued by people who gain weight and suffer health problems.

Gov. Blagojevich's effort to banish soft drinks and junk food from school vending machines didn't suit the legislature's palate. Despite capturing headlines early on, it failed to clear either chamber. Critics argued the measure would sap revenue from ailing school districts.

### ✓ Construction zones

Motorists would face stiffer fines for speeding in construction zones under a handful of bills sent to the governor. Repeated offenses would increase the fine to as much as \$10,000. One measure would allow police to use cameras to catch speeders when workers are present.

### ✓ Drug tests

Using fake urine samples or other synthetic masking agents to defraud drug tests would prompt felony charges and a fine of at least \$1,000 under legislation sent to the governor. Manufacturing or selling such products would warrant similar penalties.



## **No Child Left Behind**

School districts that don't have enough teachers who meet No Child Left Behind standards could have to spend at least 40 percent of their federal funding to recruit and retain math, science and special education teachers. The federal law considers teachers "highly qualified" when they hold a bachelor's degree and a state certificate and have passed an exam in the subject they teach. The measure went to the governor.

## **Workers' compensation**

Employees injured on-the-job could receive larger, more prompt payments for medical bills and benefits, and employers could be fined if they don't comply with legislation approved by the House. The measure would tie compensation to the rate of inflation as a way to stem rising costs associated with expensive medical care.

## **Criminal records**

Former prostitutes and reformed drug users could shield old arrests and convictions from potential employers under legislation approved by the House. Former offenders who avoid arrest for up to four years could ask a judge to seal nonviolent felony or misdemeanor charges. The legislation would not seal those records from law enforcement.

## **Horse slaughter**

Despite former film star Bo Derek's best efforts, the House twice defeated legislation to ban horse slaughtering. Chicago lawmakers sponsored the measure, which would shutter a DeKalb horse-slaughtering plant. While senators fawned over Derek and approved the measure 38-15, the tactic spurred anger in the House.

*Bethany Carson*

## **Budget on overtime**

As of early June, the Democrat-controlled legislature hadn't approved a budget for the fiscal year that begins July 1. Failure to meet the May 31 deadline triggered a three-fifths vote requirement, forcing Democrats to negotiate with Republicans.

*Illinois Issues* will update legislative action in the July/August edition and on the magazine's Web site (see <http://illinoisissues.uis.edu>).

## **Uncertain prognosis for medical liability**

Malpractice reforms remain on the waiting list in a Democrat-controlled General Assembly that accomplished little before the May 31 deadline. Late-session discord cast doubt on efforts to address the politically charged issue before the November election. But now Republicans have an opportunity to roll reforms — one of their priorities — into the contentious budget negotiations. The GOP has long sought to limit jury awards for pain and suffering, a seemingly impossible proposition with Democrats at the helm and two rulings by the Illinois Supreme Court declaring caps unconstitutional.

On May 31, the House did approve, 78-35, an amendment that included \$500,000 caps on pain and suffering awards, but the amended measure never got a vote. Republicans accused Speaker Michael Madigan of playing election-year politics by letting his members support an issue that would never advance to the Senate. In fact, four days earlier, the House had soundly defeated a measure that would require insurers to get state approval before levying double-digit increases on doctors' premiums, limit expert testimony in malpractice suits, force doctors and insurers to make more data available to the state and tax HMOs to finance a \$50 million fund doctors could tap to cover the cost of soaring premiums.

The Senate didn't vote on malpractice reforms until minutes before Memorial Day's midnight deadline. On a 47-9 vote, senators sent the House a package that seeks to protect doctors' personal assets from lawsuits. Insurers and trial lawyers argue homes and other personal assets already are protected and the provision would grant doctors such comprehensive immunity they would seldom settle claims out of court.

Speaker Madigan, a longtime ally of the trial lawyers association, has indicated the Senate proposal will not be heard in the House. However, before lawmakers were sent home to wait out budget negotiations, Madigan, a Chicago Democrat, told members, "I'm prepared to continue to work on that problem."

*Bethany Carson*

## **Education overhaul?**

In his January State of the State, Gov. Rod Blagojevich spent nearly 90 minutes berating the Illinois State Board of Education, calling it "an old, Soviet-style bureaucracy" that needed to be dismantled. With three days left in the spring session, he settled for the keys to Moscow. But lawmakers didn't even give him that before leaving town. The "sweeping reform" agreement announced in late May abandons Blagojevich's initial goal: supplanting the board with a new Department of Education. Instead, he would be authorized to make seven appointments to the nine-member board immediately. Existing rules allow him to replace five members by January. The new agreement, a pact with all four legislative leaders, would reduce board members' terms from six to four years, allowing future governors to appoint five members upon taking office and make four additional midterm selections.

Other Blagojevich proposals concerning teacher certification, school construction and district purchases of everything from pencils to employee health insurance were dropped or diluted. "He's getting seven appointments to the board. Period. That's it," House Speaker Michael Madigan told the *Daily Southtown*. "The other stuff is window-dressing. The ideas about purchasing, that's all optional." School districts would not have to buy insurance and supplies through statewide contracts. And they retain control over construction projects. Gone with those requirements were savings estimated to be as high as \$1.4 billion over four years.

Blagojevich also backed down after Madigan balked at a proposal to give teachers' unions a majority vote on a panel that sets teacher certification standards. Lawmakers did agree on language to streamline the certification process and grant a one-year extension for certificates expiring this summer, but the legislation has not been approved, nor has a temporary reprieve for the financially troubled retired downstate teachers' health insurance program. The main education reform bill flew out of the House, 116-1, but has not been considered in the Senate.

Senate Republicans voted down the governor's four-year \$2.2 billion school construction program over concerns that it lacks a funding source to repay the debt and fears the governor could politicize the distribution of projects.

*Bethany Carson*



## Consolidated communications

Gov. Rod Blagojevich hired a former corporate spokeswoman to oversee a new communications office. Marybeth Johnson, a Chicago native, will coordinate media relations for state agencies.

Through executive order, Blagojevich plans to put most public information officers who work in his agencies under one umbrella in the Illinois Department of Central Management Services. The governor's other media staff — Cheryle Jackson, Abby Ottenhoff and Rebecca Rausch — will continue to handle information regarding the governor's activities and policies.

The idea of the new office is to help provide reporters with consistent and timely information, Johnson says. Her first task has been to assess how agencies communicate with one other. "I think it's more important that the agencies talk to each other, and they're more integrated in communicating. And that way, I think, the public will get clearer, more consistent, more concise information about whatever the issue may be."

Johnson estimates state agencies have 90 communications staff members. She expects that to drop to 30 to 35 through transfers and terminations.

She will travel between Springfield and Chicago. This new position, she says, combines skills she gained during 25 years of experience in the public, private and nonprofit sectors. Her most recent job was handling media relations in the private public affairs firm of Serafin & Associates in Chicago. She previously was Chicago press secretary for former Senate President Phil Rock, an Oak Park Democrat. She also worked for the city of Chicago during the administrations of Mayors Jane Byrne and Harold Washington.

As for getting back into the public sector: "I'm excited about the fact that there's a new administration, that there are changes being made, that there are efforts to improve efficiency and better communication overall."

*Bethany Carson*

## NUTS AND BOLTS

### State says it's spending to save

Gov. Rod Blagojevich doled out \$68 million in contracts as part of his stated effort to streamline government.

The administration hopes to save \$1 billion through a private-sector overhaul of Central Management Services, the nuts-and-bolts agency that oversees procurement and property for most state agencies. But the lucrative consulting contracts, often to politically connected firms, come as the state struggles to pay its bills.

CMS Director Michael Rumman says the private firms were brought on board because, unlike agency staff, they can achieve savings right away. "It's a different type of skill set to change a system versus operating a system," he says. "We needed some short-term help to come in and change the system immediately."

Rumman estimates at least \$150 million in administrative savings in fiscal year 2004, and as much as \$1 billion over three years. The initiative, he says, appears to be an unprecedented undertaking for Illinois government.

The largest contract, a \$24.9 million three-year deal, went to Illinois Property Asset Management LLC. The Chicago consortium is charged with reforming state real estate practices that were so poorly managed by state workers that CMS often allowed agencies under the governor to sign new leases before determining whether the state already had suitable space available. Illinois Auditor General William Holland detailed the mismanagement in a February audit that belittled the agency's ability to track state assets.

"It was a scathing audit and an extremely good audit," says Rumman. By then, the administration already had sought private assistance, a move it estimates will save the state \$100 million a year.

Critics note that Chicago-based Mesirow Financial Inc., one of the firms in that consortium, advised the administration on a \$10 billion bond deal last year and once employed the cousin of John Filan, Blagojevich's budget director. The Chicago office of Greenberg Traurig, another consortium member, has contributed \$37,500 to the governor's campaign fund.

The state also will pay three firms a total of \$28 million to streamline information technology and telecommunications systems. With 1,000 software applications, 100 accounting systems and nearly two-dozen e-mail systems in use, the state's annual technology budget exceeds \$700 million. CMS estimates the consultants can save \$200 million over three years by eliminating duplicative services.

The information technology overhaul hit a snag in early May, though, when state Comptroller Daniel Hynes questioned the use of Accenture, a Bermuda-based company Hynes says avoids Illinois income taxes. Rumman says the \$11 million Accenture contract includes a provision requiring Accenture to pay state taxes on the deal. Critics also questioned whether a conflict existed because Rumman worked as a paid consultant for Accenture for six months in 2001. He says that relationship played no role in landing Accenture the contract.

A \$14.7 million one-year deal was awarded to the Chicago office of McKinsey & Company Inc. The firm is expected to save the state \$609 million over three years by identifying cost-effective ways to pool purchasing.

With the state spending \$15 million a year on goods and services, mostly through contracts that are automatically renewed, the system is rife for reform, Rumman argues. "By having so many vendors, we are not capturing the proper economies of scale."

Rumman also says agencies might not be getting the full picture. "Right now, we might just say, 'Hey, how cheap is that copier?' rather than asking the question, 'How much does the toner cost?' or 'What's the maintenance?'" Rumman says. "That's where the real expense is."

Looking to save another \$1 million, the administration awarded a \$214,000 contract to Maximus, a Virginia company charged with bringing best practices to the state's management of its vehicles. The contract came under fire because, over the past two years, Blagojevich has accepted \$25,500 in campaign contributions from Maximus.

*Pat Guinane*

## **Fired warden dies in Kosovo after taking UN police job**

Two former Shawnee Correctional Center employees working with a United Nations police force in Kosovo were killed when their convoy was attacked.

Kim Bigley, the prison's former warden, died April 17, the day of the attack. The 47-year-old had worked for the Illinois Department of Corrections for 19 years.

Gary Weston, a 52-year-old retired corrections worker from Vienna, suffered gunshot wounds to the head in the attack. He died a week later at Saint Louis University Medical Center. Weston had worked for the Illinois Department of Corrections for 29 years. He was with the department's auditing team when he retired in 2002.

Bigley, of Paducah, Ky., and formerly of Vienna, White Hall and Greenfield in Illinois, became warden of Shawnee Correctional Center in 2002. She was fired last fall by Gov. Rod Blagojevich. Bigley was one of seven corrections administrators who were fired by the governor and are suing the state, arguing their dismissals were based on politics and not job performance.

The administration maintains the workers served at the will of the governor and that any new governor has the right to replace appointees with people who share his agenda.

The attack that killed Bigley and Weston took place in Mitrovica, a city in northern Kosovo. A Jordanian police officer attacked the convoy in a shootout that killed another U.S. correctional worker from New York and wounded 10 others. The Jordanian was killed by return fire. The attack occurred without warning and for unknown reasons. An international prosecutor is investigating the incident.

DynCorp International, a company hired under a U.S. State Department contract to support the U.N. mission, employed the corrections officials.

Bigley and Weston had just completed their first day of job orientation and were leaving a detention center when their convoy was fired upon.

*Pat Guinane*

## **NEWS BITES**

### **Durbin takes campaign role**

Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry named Illinois U.S. Sen. Richard Durbin of Springfield co-chair of the Democratic National Committee.

Durbin will serve with U.S. Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones of Ohio. They will be liaisons between the Kerry campaign and the national committee and Democratic campaigns for the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House. They also will be responsible for helping to raise campaign funds, according to the Kerry campaign.

"Senator Durbin and Congresswoman Tubbs Jones have a long and distinguished record of fighting for the things Americans care about, such as a strong economy, new and better jobs, good schools and affordable and accessible health care," Kerry said in a prepared statement. "They will be strong leaders in our campaign and I am thrilled to have them on our team."

### **White supremacist convicted**

A federal judge convicted East Peoria white supremacist Matthew Hale of soliciting an FBI plant to murder a federal judge who in 2002 ordered his World Church of the Creator to change its name.

The man Hale hired as a security chief secretly tape-recorded conversations the two had about federal Judge Joan Lefkow.

Hale also was convicted of three counts of obstructing justice.

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## QUOTABLE

“It’s just the respect of the process. There are three branches of government, and we’re a part of this. We’re equal partners. And I’m just not so sure that the governor respects our part.”

*Senate Minority Leader Frank Watson, a Greenville Republican, commenting on Gov. Rod Blagojevich’s relationship with the General Assembly. A few days earlier, at a Chicago press conference, Blagojevich said legislators have a “narrow-minded, special interest-focused mind-set.”*

## Methamphetamine labs spread across the state

Police statewide cracked down on 1,100 makers of the highly addictive, home-made drug methamphetamine last year, almost 700 more than three years earlier.

Meth, a long-lasting stimulant concocted in basements, garages and other makeshift “labs,” was uncovered in 79 of the state’s 102 counties, up from 56 in 2000. Master Sgt. Bruce Liebe of the Illinois State Police says more labs are being discovered because the drug is growing in popularity and because police are better trained to detect the “cooks” who manufacture meth.

Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan says what was once isolated along the Missouri border now has seeped into most of downstate Illinois and is being encountered, to a lesser extent, in Cook and the collar counties. “We would read about a meth lab being dismantled in a dilapidated garage in the middle of nowhere,” Madigan says. “But today represents a much more different picture.”

Ten years ago, most of Illinois’ meth came from Mexican drug organizations through California, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. Now Illinoisans are making their own.

“Individuals get addicted to it, and pretty soon they want to be the producers of their own supply,” Liebe says. One meth recipe is made with anhydrous ammonia, a fertilizer that cooks can steal from large outdoor tanks on farms.

The other type of meth employs ingredients that are compact and easy to move. “You’re only limited to the imagination where a cook’s lab could turn up,” Liebe says. He recalls the police stopping a man riding a bicycle and finding that he had the makings of a meth lab in his backpack.

The accessibility of meth’s ingredients — cold medicine, lithium batteries, fuel, coffee filters, salt and matches — contributes to the drug’s popularity, Madigan says.

## METH RESTRICTIONS Limits on medicine sales

As of mid-May, both legislative chambers had approved measures designed to limit purchases of cold medicines, which contain ingredients for making meth.

Attorney General Lisa Madigan, who proposed the legislation, hopes to thwart the drug by forcing retailers to limit the availability of those items.

“The only practical way to accomplish this is to target the sale of cold medicine containing ephedrine or pseudo-ephedrine,” Madigan says. “Ephedrine is the key ingredient in making meth. It is similar to yeast in bread — you cannot make meth without it.”

The legislation is designed to limit purchases to two packs of adult-strength cold medicine per customer at one time. It also would require that drugs be sold in blister packs rather than as loose pills in a bottle, and prohibit cold medicines from being sold at self-serve checkout lanes.

The fines would range from \$100 to \$5,000 for store owners who violate the rules.

*Bethany Carson*

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## PHOTO ESSAY

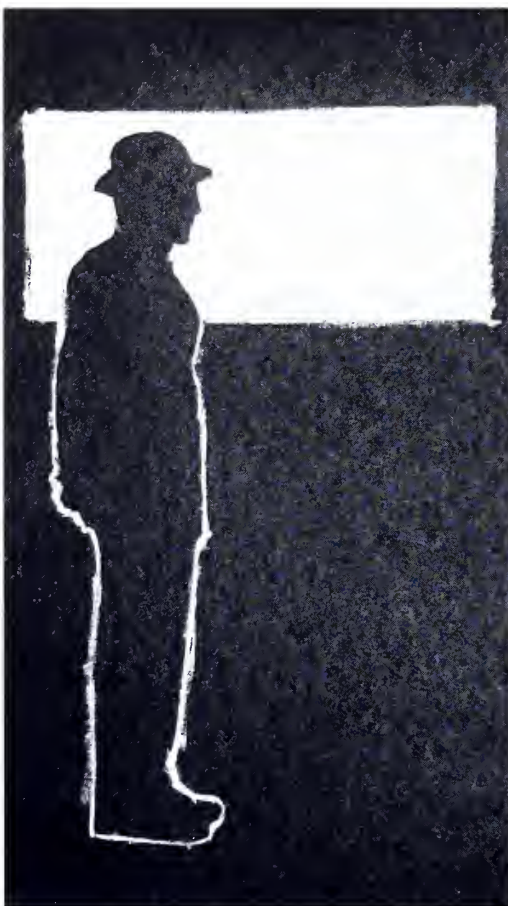
### Collegiate Artists Competition

Works by the winners and finalists of the state's first Collegiate Artists Competition will be on display in University Galleries at Illinois State University in Normal until July 3.

Injung Oh, a student at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, won the Governor's Medallion of Excellence for her painting, *Recognition*. She received one of four awards

presented in the juried competition, which was sponsored by Gov. Rod Blagojevich, the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the state's higher education community.

The 2004 edition of what is planned to be an annual contest drew entries from more than 260 undergraduate students from public and private colleges.



*Clockwise from top left: The Traveler, acrylic on canvas by Nathan Redwood from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago; BAS 1&2, paper, rubber cord and linen thread by Debra Virgens from McHenry County College; First Kiss, colored pencil by Bethany Huffman from Shawnee Community College; Stubborn, painting, oil on paper by Alejandra Salaverria from Black Hawk College.*



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# Labor friendly

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The governor is good  
to workers. Unless he's their boss

by Pat Guinane  
Photograph by sculptor Peter Fagan

The status of Illinois labor can be read between the lines of a single piece of legislation advancing through the Democrat-controlled General Assembly. Pushed this spring by Service Employees International Union, House Bill 4241 would protect janitors and security guards from being fired for three months after a private firm buys or assumes management of an office building or commercial property.

"It's a horrible bill," says Sen. Kay Wojcik, the ranking Republican on the Labor and Commerce Committee. It's no surprise that she and other members of her party are seeking to shield the business community from

*Peter Fagan's Illinois Workers Memorial is located off Monroe Street on the state Capitol grounds.*



another state mandate. But some Democrats, too, have been critical of the proposal because it doesn't apply to publicly owned buildings. "Why is there a double standard?" asked Sen. Martin Sandoval, a Chicago Democrat. "Why are we going to impose this on the private sector when the government itself doesn't want [it]?"

The reality, of course, is that the cash-strapped state isn't any more interested than the private sector is in shouldering potentially costly labor requirements. Nevertheless, by promoting labor-friendly proposals aimed at the private sector, Gov. Rod Blagojevich — the first Democrat to win the state's top executive post in a quarter century — has managed to stay true to his pro-labor campaign rhetoric.

He has, for example, signed into law a minimum wage increase and several other measures aimed at improving the lives of working people, arguably at the expense of a business community that was already smarting from an economic downturn. Yet, in light of the state's own bleak budget, he has been less kind to public employees.

"As an employer he hasn't lived up to his expectations," says Henry Bayer, executive director of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 31, which represents some 37,000 state workers.

In the 2002 governor's contest, AFSCME was one of many unions to endorse Blagojevich, a candidate who promised not to "balance the budget on the backs of working men and women."

"We regret the fact that he has not lived up to his campaign promises," Bayer says. "Frankly, many of our members feel that they have been betrayed. On one hand he told them he was going to stop doing what Gov. [George] Ryan was doing, and he has turned around and tried to do the same things. Gov. Ryan closed [state] facilities. He's trying to close facilities. Gov. Ryan wanted us to take a pay cut. He's trying to impose a pay cut on us. Those are not things that a governor who's friendly to working people would do."

In fact, this stinging assessment is

leveled at a governor who, in his first 17 months on the job, has bucked the business community and President George W. Bush at the behest of workers. But critics say those labor-friendly efforts were easy because they cost the state little.

When President Bush planned to rewrite federal overtime regulations this spring, for instance, Blagojevich signed legislation blocking the proposed changes, saying they would have eliminated overtime pay for 375,000 Illinoisans. And, thanks to legislation the governor signed last summer, Illinois is one of a dozen states that ensures workers an hourly wage higher than the \$5.15 federal minimum. The rate rose 35 cents to \$5.50 in January and moves to \$6.50 next year. Further, the Equal Pay Act Blagojevich signed on Mother's Day 2003 is intended to end gender-based wage disparity in Illinois, a state where women were paid 71 cents for every dollar a man earned last year.

The second-year governor also signed legislation expanding the state's prevailing wage law, which determines employee wages for contractors working on state construction projects. And he signed legislation that forces businesses to return grant money and other state handouts if they fail to deliver on promises to create new jobs with the funds. Yet another measure signed by Blagojevich prevents employers from signing contracts with day labor agencies when their workers go on strike. Caterpillar Inc., the Peoria-based heavy equipment manufacturer, successfully challenged that legislation in court.

Of course, these are the kind of pro-labor measures Democrats traditionally support. "It's the power of the majority party and it's the philosophy," says Wojcik, the Schaumburg Republican on the Senate labor panel. "They're pro-union. You always hear Rod Blagojevich talking about the working families, and when you have a pro-union attitude, you're going to have a lot of union bills going through."

That wasn't the case less than a decade ago when Wojcik was a representative and her party controlled the Executive

Mansion, the state Senate and, through a two-year stint, the Illinois House. Among the business-friendly moves during the GOP reign was a repeal of the Structural Work Act. More commonly known as the "scaffolding act," it had allowed injured construction workers to receive benefits beyond what they were eligible for under workers' compensation. Whatever its actual impact, debate over that provision has gained symbolic stature.

Given the number of labor-friendly initiatives that are whizzing through the legislature now, Wojcik says, she's watching for the scaffolding act to reappear. "I call it the Rip Van Winkle syndrome," she says. "[The Democrats have] been sleeping for 10 years and now they've re-awoken."

And they've gotten the attention of the state's business community. "I don't sense a lot of sensitivity on the part of the administration to the cost-of-doing-business component of the equation," says Doug Whitley, president and CEO of the Illinois Chamber of Commerce.

Business representatives, too, can point to promise in the new governor's campaign. After all, while union endorsements fueled grass-roots support for Blagojevich's candidacy, business groups put up a lot of the cash. They funneled \$12.2 million to his campaign, nearly three times the \$4.2 million labor groups anted up.

Overall, Blagojevich raised \$26 million, including \$176,000 from A. Finkl & Sons, the Chicago steel plant where the candidate kicked off his campaign and later declared victory. Blagojevich's late father, a Serbian immigrant, worked in the steel plant, a fact his son mentioned at many campaign stops.

On the stump, Blagojevich wooed employers and working people by promising not to raise the state income tax or sales taxes. But after a deficit pegged at \$5 billion last year and a shortfall of about \$2 billion this year, some early supporters in both camps are beginning to wish Blagojevich would recant.

Business groups stop short of endorsing a general tax increase, but say they've shouldered an unfair





amount of the budget burden. Last year, the administration hiked hundreds of fees totaling \$420 million and eliminated about \$365 million in corporate tax breaks. The state chamber is legally challenging one of the fees, along with the administration's practice of diverting dollars from those hikes into the state's main checkbook. The business community argues these moves have raised the cost of doing business as much as the minimum wage increase and other pro-labor measures.

"We have just really, I think, poisoned the well here," says state Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka, chair of the state Republican Party and a frequent administration critic. She says she's not surprised Blagojevich has been willing to sign labor-friendly legislation that increases costs for the private sector. "It's always easier when someone else is paying for it," Topinka says. "Any damn fool can do that."

Business interests contend the governor has stunted job growth. They cite several examples. Printing giant

R.R. Donnelley & Sons recently informed Blagojevich the company was holding back on expansion plans at several of its Illinois plants because last year the state lifted a sales tax break on graphic arts equipment, including multimillion dollar printing presses. The move was supposed to bring the state \$4 million a year in sales taxes. By mid-May, the House had approved a measure that would reinstate the tax break.

The trucking industry also has been unhappy with Blagojevich's budget moves, arguing this spring that a 36 percent hike in licensing fees was driving truckers out of Illinois. Interstate commercial truck registrations declined by 17,000 for 2005, a 10 percent drop the industry blames on the fee hike imposed to help balance Blagojevich's first budget. The move was expected to bring in \$92 million, but truckers warned it would give them a reason to move out of state.

Republicans expressed similar concerns during the debate over the measure allowing Illinois to opt out of the proposed federal overtime overhaul. They warned it will push businesses out of the state. One GOP lawmaker lumped the bill in with a number of administration-backed policies, charging "the state has gone to hell in a handbasket because of these decisions."

Critics argue the governor has been more than willing to burden business, whether for his own benefit or in the name of labor. But he hasn't been willing, they argue, to shoulder the same responsibilities on the state's dime, taking a hard-line stance on salaries and benefits for government employees.

"We have to make sure that what's a fair deal for state employees must be weighed against the interests of the people they serve," Blagojevich said during his February budget address.

"I'm pro-labor. I always have been. My father was a steelworker. My mother worked as a ticket agent for the Chicago Transit Authority. Both were members of labor unions.

"But that doesn't mean we don't evaluate the situation facing our state fairly and honestly," the governor

continued. "This isn't a negotiation between a private corporation and its union. The money on the table doesn't belong to us and it doesn't belong to the unions.

"It belongs to the people."

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees represents a majority of state workers. Bayer, the union's top official, says the governor dug in early on. In February, during state employee contract negotiations, Blagojevich issued a budget proposal that included no money to provide salary increases for thousands of state workers whose labor contract expires this month. The plan also showed the state saving \$60 million by forcing union employees to begin picking up a greater share of their pension costs, according to a staff analysis by House Democrats.

Last year, nonunion employees who worked in agencies under the governor began making the so-called pension pickup, which cost workers roughly 4 percent of their salaries. AFSCME has been strongly opposed to the move because the state agreed in 1991 to shoulder that pension cost in lieu of a pay increase.

That isn't the only change Blagojevich wants to make in pension policies for public employees and retirees. In light of an unstable budget, he wants to reduce the state's pension payments by \$215 million in each of the next four years, arguing the money was freed up last year when the state sold \$10 billion in pension bonds at a cheaper interest rate than expected.

Blagojevich also wants to avoid paying \$312 million that state actuaries say is needed to cover a spike in pension costs that occurred after 11,000 state workers took early retirement in 2002. The actuaries say the early retirement program offered to state employees during Gov. George Ryan's administration will cost \$382 million in each of the next nine years. Blagojevich's budget for the fiscal year beginning in July originally set aside \$70 million, which would have covered original cost estimates.

While AFSCME pushed to hold the line on pension benefits and bargained annual cost of living increases, the



administration began looking to cut costs in health care coverage.

The Department of Central Management Services put its employee health care contracts up for bid. After the bids were submitted, Health Alliance, a company that has served central Illinois for 23 years, didn't make the cut. Counting state workers, university employees, retirees and their families, the company currently provides health care for 90,000 downstate enrollees. After a week of protests, the administration backed down, allowing Health Alliance to resubmit its bid and, in the meantime, temporarily extended the company's contract.

State employees also are concerned about further workforce reductions. Blagojevich exacerbated the tension in late May by suggesting the state could plug a \$300 million budget hole by cutting 5,000 jobs. That threat aside, state government already is operating at a level not seen in three decades. Fewer than 60,000 employees are estimated to work in agencies under the governor's control, a drop of 10,000 since early retirement was offered two years ago.

Blagojevich wants to cut 376 positions in the Department of Corrections, an agency where AFSCME is well represented. And he wants to save \$44 million by closing a correctional center for youths in suburban St. Charles and a prison in downstate Vandalia, moves Bayer considers another affront to union workers. The Vandalia Correctional Center employs 457 people, while Illinois Youth Center in St. Charles provides 317 jobs. Union rules allow workers to move to other facilities in a system based on seniority, so the closings wouldn't eliminate every job.

But Bayer says closing the Vandalia prison would run afoul of a 2002 pledge candidate Blagojevich made to AFSCME workers. "In fact," he says, "that's one, among many places, where he had made a commitment, and it's on the record that he went there and said, 'I'm not going to balance the budget on the backs of correctional employees.'"

In searching for a way to balance the budget, Blagojevich has settled on a number of controversial solutions

beyond the hard-line stance on the AFSCME contract. But Bayer and other union leaders say they tried to warn Blagojevich the state doesn't have sufficient revenues.

"We did our best to get him to not say, 'I will not raise taxes during my term in office,'" says Margaret Blackshere, president of the Illinois AFL-CIO. "I still keep telling him: 'Stop saying that.'"

AFSCME blames the budget for a number of Blagojevich's unfilled promises. The governor reopened Sheridan Correctional Center but has not made good on promises to open a pair of prison work camps. Nor has he opened Zeller Mental Health Center in Peoria or the Lincoln Developmental Center, both of which would employ unionized workers. Lincoln Developmental Center was allotted funds for refurbishing, amid discussions to reopen the facility.

"You always have to work within the constraints of the budget. Every governor has done that, and, if past governors had done a better job of that, we probably wouldn't be in the financial mess that we're in," says Sen. Carol Ronen, the Chicago Democrat who chairs the Senate labor panel. "I think what he's shown, given the fiscal constraints, that he's tried very hard to balance the budget, but not do it on the backs of working families."

After a legislative committee hearing in which two union proposals advanced to the full Senate, Tom Balanoff, president of Service Employees International Union Local 1 in Chicago, was asked to assess the Blagojevich Administration.

"The disappointment for us is that the budget is in such shape that there's not money there to do the things that need to be done. That's a real disappointment," says Balanoff, a force behind the measure offering janitors and security guards — at least in the private sector — some job protection when buildings undergo management changes.

After a short pause, Balanoff offers a summary statement. "It's been good for labor," he says. "It's been good for working people." But, then, that depends on who they work for. □

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*Last year, nonunion employees who worked in agencies under the governor began making a so-called pension pickup, which cost workers roughly 4 percent of their salaries.*

# A certified mess

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## Frustration fueled efforts to gain a stronger hand in setting teacher qualifications

by Bethany Carson

Chris Barham, a gym teacher in Springfield, has spent months navigating an obstacle course. As a fourth-year teacher, he has been trying to attend the necessary workshops and complete the necessary paperwork to be recertified by the state.

"A lot of my spare time is spent jumping through hoops," he says.

Barham teaches physical education at Wanless and Wilcox schools in Springfield's Public School District 186. And he's one of 4,000 Illinois teachers with four years of classroom experience who are trying to advance under the state's system for certifying their qualifications. If Barham and his colleagues don't fulfill those requirements by this summer, their fifth year on the job could be their last.

That's because this year, for the first time, fourth-year teachers were required to abide by a new set of rules governing those who want to advance from the early stages of their careers. Under the rules, they must attend workshops or graduate courses, write self-analyses and be observed in their classrooms by colleagues or administrators.

But getting more details on these new rules has been frustrating for

Barham and others. While teachers received a letter outlining six options for fulfilling the requirements, only one option had actually been approved when the new law took effect last July. Additional details, which trickled out slowly, revealed hurdles and hoops teachers thought they had already cleared.

Besides the fourth-year teachers, another 3,000 more experienced educators need to renew their certificates. Yet, the State Board of Education hasn't been able to keep up, leaving those teachers hanging, too. The agency contends its staff is bridled by budget cuts and buried under paperwork.

Mounting frustration among teachers this spring added momentum to their unions' efforts to gain a stronger hand in the system that oversees elementary and secondary education. With the support of Gov. Rod Blagojevich — who wants control of the state board — unions pushed to create an independent certification panel dominated by union representative who could cast binding votes. Unions have had only an advisory role.

Their representatives faced a hurdle, though, when Democratic House Speaker Michael Madigan

raised concerns about that plan. Still, they argue the emphasis on the membership of the certification panel obscures long-range problems, as if participants in the debate were only interested in the first hundred yards of a one-mile race.

Caught in the middle, teachers are nevertheless trying to cover those first hundred yards so they can stay on course.

Despite the seeming complications, the state's system for testing the qualifications of its teachers has received positive national attention. Illinois earned the only A grade out of 20 states evaluated by the National Council on Teacher Quality. The spring 2004 study rated states on how well they ensure that teachers are qualified in the subjects they teach, a federal No Child Left Behind mandate. This state requires teachers to pass three tests before they enter the classroom: a basic skills test, a content test and a new test grading teacher performance in the classroom.

Illinois did not always have a top-rated system. Until 16 years ago, teachers weren't tested at all. Illinois merely certified teachers as "standard." The state went to a three-tiered system in 1999, adding two new categories, one for beginning teachers





*Mounting frustration among teachers about confusing certification rules added momentum to union efforts to gain a stronger hand in the system that oversees elementary and secondary education.*

and another for those who have obtained advanced degrees. Last year, the legislature added a proficiency test for new teachers.

The tests are considered a good way to detect teachers' weaknesses in the subjects they plan to teach, according to the National Council on Teacher Quality. The report also says the state's certification standards have clarity and serve as evidence "the state is serious about addressing the problem."

"We give more tests than any other state in the nation," says Susan Shea, legislative liaison for the Illinois Education Association. "It's an A, but it's an A that's truly burdensome to teachers."

Still, teachers say, the exams are less burdensome than the workshops and associated paperwork now required through their first four years in the classroom.

If the fourth-year teachers fail to complete the requirements, they could receive one-year extensions. But if they cannot squeeze all the requirements into the next school year, while they teach full-time, they are slated to lose state certification — and their jobs.

While the consequences for failing to meet the requirements are clear,

educators say the roadmap is cluttered and complicated. They have struggled to understand their options since the new rules were signed into law last summer.

"It's a lot of paperwork; it's a lot of, 'Do you have the right information?' And a lot of people don't have the right information," says Barham, the Springfield gym teacher. "So you have to decipher and find out for yourself, and do a lot of legwork, which takes away time from my kids."

Deciphering the new rules has taken time because few details were revealed when the state board sent that letter to teachers a year ago, says Chicago social studies teacher Andrew Engel. When the law took effect, obtaining a graduate degree was the only option that had been approved. Engel says trying to fill in the gaps proved frustrating after budget cuts at the state board left him with no Regional Office of Education in Chicago to answer his questions.

Chicago's operations were crippled when Blagojevich shaved more than \$1 million from the state board's teacher certification fund last year, spurring the agency to cut its certification staff from 49 to 27.

The governor signed legislation reinstating the certification funding

in early May. The state board then moved to hire a half-dozen certification staff members for Chicago. But, with the following year's funding an unknown, the board held back on replacing all 22 positions it lost.

The state's 56 other regional offices also have had to overcome budget cuts and staff shortages. Those offices are home to regional superintendents and a hub of services to help teachers draft their career maps, comply with state law and receive state board approval.

While adjusting to smaller staffs, the regional offices also took on more responsibilities related to the federal No Child Left Behind mandates.

"Requirements are continuing to increase, and our funding is continuing to decrease," says Dan Anderson, superintendent for the state's southern region. "We lost about \$70,000 — from \$140,000 to \$70,000 — to use for salaries for people in those training areas."

The budget crunch, coupled with increased expectations for fourth-year teachers, challenged regional offices to offer workshops that address the state's nine standards for classroom-related issues. For instance, workshops must address ways teachers can plan lessons to accommodate a

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***The governor signed legislation reinstating the certification funding in early May. The state board then moved to hire a half-dozen certification staff members for Chicago. But, with the following year's funding an unknown, the board held back on replacing all 22 positions it lost.***

diverse classroom or ways they can help students develop critical thinking and social skills. "And because all the [regional offices] had taken pretty big losses in staff development, it was not the best year to have to create a class," says Helen Tolan, regional superintendent of Sangamon County.

Teachers have other options to meet the state's certification standards, but they are expensive or limited. Teachers can take four semester hours of graduate level coursework at an estimated cost of \$600 to \$700 at one of 11 colleges in Illinois. Teachers also were advised in the letter they could take a national exam, written by the state board, gauging teachers' knowledge of their subject areas. But the exam has yet to be written. State Superintendent of Education Robert Schiller says it will take two to three years to develop the test, and it would be costly to offer the test online. Teachers also can take a mentoring program. But those who have chosen this route have been surprised to learn they needed two years under the program — especially since they were only informed of the new requirement a year ago.

Confusion is widespread, says Carrie VanAlstine, who designs workshops in the Springfield area to help teachers meet the new requirements. "They're getting misinformed, some from their [regional offices]," she says. "And the state board doesn't even have anyone to answer the phones."

"It's their problem in regards to not understanding," Schiller says, referring to the regional offices. "When you lost as much staffing as they had, you lose the continuity there."

To find answers, teachers can study the state board's Web site, e-mail staff or enter questions into an online discussion board.

Engel says he studied the state board's Web site, which sometimes offered contradictory information about deadlines. "I really wish they would have had these things in place before making the decisions," he says. "That would have given everyone time to adjust and prepare. Why make me go through four months of stress?"

During an eight-hour Saturday workshop in Springfield, VanAlstine helps teachers steer past the misinformation and develop a strategy for the road ahead.

"I did not feel very informed until the workshop on Saturday," says Emily Burton, a Springfield special education teacher. "I have been given inaccurate information since the beginning of this year. I was even told I would be grandfathered in."

In reality, Burton needs the workshop so she can fill out three hours' worth of forms, find someone to observe her while she teaches the lessons from the workshop and go through the remaining steps to file her paperwork with the state so she can teach next year.

But Burton says one-size-fits-all standards for creating a positive classroom environment aren't always applicable to all classrooms. "Some of my students are nonverbal, need assistance with using the restroom and fall in the severe range of mental retardation. The workshop was interesting, but many of the ideas are already used or could not be used with this population."

She says she chose the workshop route to fulfill her requirements because she will not have completed her master's degree in administration before her certificate expires July 30.

Engel, who lives in Chicago, says he chose the workshop route because earning his master's degree would have been too time-consuming during his first years of teaching. He drove from Chicago to Springfield to attend the eight-hour workshop rather than attend a series of workshops every weekend for a month. Other workshops closer to Chicago aren't scheduled until June 28 and 29, two days before his certificate expires.

When teachers spend so much time deciphering complicated rules and searching for limited workshops, their focus isn't on the classroom, says P.E. Cross, regional superintendent of Hamilton and Jefferson counties in southern Illinois. Cross says teachers think, "What is it that I have to do so that my certificate remains valid?" rather than focusing on what is it that



I could possibly take that would make me more effective and would increase student achievement.”

The paperwork is expected as a teacher, says high school chemistry teacher David Peeler of Springfield, but the confusing process and limited options invite criticism. “I find it kind of difficult to understand this whole process, especially since we’re trying to recruit — get people to join education,” he says. “And they want fourth-year teachers to jump through these hoops. We want to give incentives for people to go into education.”

VanAlstine says the credit requirements do serve as an incentive. “I get more teachers involved. The new teachers and the veteran teachers have to have them, which is excellent because we can’t always afford to offer a stipend or a salary increase.”

Local administrators, too, respect the law’s intent but say the amount of paperwork could be reduced.

“The overall thought process, to make sure people get emphasis in their first four years — the concept is good,” says Anderson, the regional superintendent in southern Illinois. “We’re improving the quality of teachers and spending some time with their professional development — those I don’t have a problem with. The problem [is with the] bureaucratic concepts of what a teacher needs to do in order to improve.”

For instance, VanAlstine says, making teachers write self-analyses after they attend workshops, only to save the paperwork in a file cabinet for five years, could stand to be changed.

During the week following the Springfield workshop, lawmakers considered nixing the rule for teachers to be observed and to write self-analyses.

Teachers’ unions supported that idea along with the Blagojevich Administration, led by Brenda Holmes, the governor’s deputy chief of staff for education.

State Superintendent Schiller agrees the observation requirement is costly and time-consuming and says the state board is working on ways to provide more options to enable teachers to move up the certification ladder without getting bogged down by

paperwork. The state board already has encouraged regional offices to offer an online certification program for teachers, which could save time and money.

Late in the session, House Majority Leader Barbara Flynn Currie was working on a proposal to streamline the certification standards and grant a reprieve for fourth-year teachers. But the proposed changes would only solve the immediate problem for fourth-year teachers, says Shea of the Illinois Education Association. She says while the legislature needs to address the complicated rules and limited options for beginning teachers, the debate distracts from two longer-term issues: the governance of the certification board and, ultimately, the governance of the entire education system.

In fact, Shea says, tinkering with the certification requirements only skirts the union’s attempt to gain more autonomy from the state board. The union supported changes to the governance of teacher certification, including a panel that would operate independently of the state board. The Blagojevich Administration, the business community and the state board all offered ideas for who should sit on the panel, ranging from parents to business representatives to higher education administrators.

The governor proposed that six of 11 seats be given to teachers’ unions, a plan Speaker Madigan criticized in April. “My reading of the bill tells me that if the bill were to become law, teachers’ unions in the state would control this process,” Madigan said at a committee hearing. “And here, speaking for myself, I’m not prepared to support that.” Madigan then penned a letter, addressed to “Dear Friend of Education,” suggesting that no one group should dominate the certification board.

Madigan also took issue with the governor’s plan to overhaul the state board, which oversees the certification panel. He proposed instead that each new governor be authorized to appoint five new state board members, with four holdovers from the previous administration for continuity.

Rep. Jay Hoffman, a Collinsville Democrat and key Blagojevich ally, argued that replacing a majority of the state board wouldn’t bring the accountability teachers and parents are asking for. “I think if you were simply to change five members of the board, there will still be four old members,” increasing the likelihood for stalemates and lack of change, he says. “I think we need fundamental changes.”

For their part, teachers want a binding say over the rules that affect teachers’ work lives. Currently, the certification panel can only recommend changes to the rules. The state board can ignore them.

“It’s not that we want more seats on the [certification] board. It’s that we want more independence,” Shea says. “The teachers are most interested in being responsible for their own profession. It’s not unlike the doctors. It’s not unlike the examiners for the attorneys. It’s not anything that’s foreign to how we operate in other professions.”

Shea says an independent panel would allow for more consistency in the certification process. “We need to have a common voice. Everyone needs to say the same thing. We need to agree on the messages that everyone puts on the [state board] Web page.”

But the attention devoted to the certification requirements and the certification panel pushes the governor’s main agenda out of the limelight, Shea says. The underlying priority has been to gain better control of the Illinois State Board of Education, which she says would be easiest if the governor had more control.

A possible shift in who governs the system doesn’t concern Regional Superintendent Tolan, as long, she says, as a transformation is not too rushed.

“Who I have to send [the paperwork] to is one thing, but how the teachers have to do the professional development — the specific rules and expectations — that’s what matters.”

VanAlstine says teachers just want a consistent roadmap. “I don’t want to play that politics game. Tell me what I need to do, and I’ll respond to it.” □

# EDUCATION REWRITE

## *Illinois adjusts to the requirements of federal law*

by Beverley Scobell

*While campaigning for president, George W. Bush borrowed a phrase from the Children's Defense Fund to sell his education message: "No child left behind." Attaching it to the most recent rewrite of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Republican-led Congress approved the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, and President Bush signed it into law.*

*Several states found the requirements so demanding they considered rejecting the federal funds tied to them. For Illinois, which has faced the largest budget deficit in recent history, that wasn't an option. The federal government is providing this state with an additional \$778.3 million to fund the programs.*

*Illinois Issues examines three aspects of the sweeping changes required by the federal law: diminished resources for gifted students, tutors for low-achieving students and university help for public schoolteachers.*

The Editors

### GIFTED PROGRAMS

Illinois' next generation of intellectuals and virtuosos may have to make its mark on the world without the help of state government. In part because of pressures from the federal No Child Left Behind law, Gov. Rod Blagojevich stripped mandates on local schools to educate gifted students and, in this fiscal year, shifted dollars for those programs into school districts' general funds.

For next fiscal year's budget, which begins July 1, the Illinois State Board of Education recommended reinstating the requirement that districts identify

and develop programs to serve high-achieving students. It also recommended reinstating the \$19 million grant that supported the specialized learning.

"If you don't have programs that are focused on the gifted, then those students are adversely affected, and they get left behind because there are not special programs to keep them interested," says Karen Craven, spokeswoman for the state board.

Brenda Holmes, the governor's deputy chief of staff for education, says the governor wanted to eliminate mandates and allow school districts to spend as they see fit. Last year, the state added \$381 million new dollars to education, including \$29 million to identify low-income preschoolers at risk of failure.

That shift in emphasis to the weakest students, spurred by penalties in the No Child Left Behind law, meant schools across the state had to shuffle funding to continue serving students identified as gifted.

"The \$25,000 we did get from the state had to come from other places in our budget," says Bob Meixner, assistant superintendent for Macomb Community Unit School District 185. But, he says, the students still have advanced placement classes in the high school and teachers are still getting what they need to teach gifted children, including professional training and resource materials.

Robert Evans, a board member of Rockford School District 205, says, "It broke my heart" to vote to diminish the funding for the gifted program. A college professor, he says his daughter is a product of Rockford's gifted education classes and has her choice of colleges because her talents were nurtured by the

program. Gifted education will continue for the more than 1,000 students who qualify, says Tom Hoffman, the district's chief financial officer, but the program had to be cut by about \$35,000.

The story is similar throughout the state. Of the roughly 2 million Illinois public education students, more than 160,000 qualify for gifted programs. In 2002, the state board pegged that number at 7.9 percent of all Illinois students. For funding purposes, the state defines gifted as children who are in the top 5 percent of students. Before those dollars were eliminated, the state gave each school district \$200 for each gifted student.

That was a "pittance" compared to what is needed to serve the gifted population, says Susan Rhodes, principal at Iles Elementary School, Springfield's magnet school for gifted students in grades one through five. She also has been the gifted education coordinator for Springfield School District 186 for 11 years. The \$155,000 that district received barely paid for three teachers, she says. Yet it was providing gifted programs for 522 students in grades one to five in 21 elementary schools before elimination of the funding.

But this year, gifted programming is limited to the magnet school's 249 students, some additional curriculum at one middle school and advanced coursework and advanced placement classes in the high schools.

Students no longer participate in pull-out programs, where they leave their classrooms to get instruction from teachers trained to challenge them. Such resource teachers have been eliminated throughout the district. As a result, their students face the frustration of boredom



in the classroom.

Rhodes says research has shown that when teachers introduce a new concept, students achieving in the middle of the bell curve need 17 to 22 contacts or repetitions to master the material. Gifted children need one to five. "They make connections much faster. Once you've explained it to them, they're ready to move on."

However, with No Child Left Behind, which requires measurable, yearly progress for all students, teachers want to make sure everybody meets those standards. So, Rhodes says, they may repeat a lesson 25 or 30 times to make sure that happens. "Then the gifted kids are sitting in those classrooms bored out of their minds."

Minority gifted children and those from small school districts are especially vulnerable because their parents often do not have resources or the option of sending them to private schools.

Thirty percent of high school dropouts are gifted students, she says. "School is just not relevant to them any more."

## PRIVATE TUTORS

This spring, Illinois schoolchildren took tests that will determine whether more of them will be eligible through the federal No Child Left Behind law to hire private tutors at taxpayer expense. Those scores could add up to trouble this fall for a handful of small, downstate districts where such services are not readily available.

A provision in federal law requiring schools to give low-achieving students extra academic help will kick in with full force this year as more schools fall into the failing-to-meet-standards category. About two dozen small, downstate districts are on the cusp of sanctions that will require them to offer tutoring services that are not always available outside of cities.

"Urban districts have more access to the service providers than do rural districts," says Madlene Hamilton, a researcher with the Center on Education Policy, a Washington, D.C.-based non-profit group studying tutoring programs across the nation. Most rural school districts are geographically distant from the companies providing the services, as most are located in urban or suburban areas. "The providers require that a certain number of students take advantage of their services before they provide

tutoring expert who ran a private service in northern Illinois for 30 years, says the No Child Left Behind law has begun the "institutionalization" of tutoring. Parents of low-achieving students will be given a voucher, he says, to choose a tutor from a state-approved list.

Indeed, the State Board of Education recommends 31 private tutoring companies from which parents can choose. Costs range from \$6 to \$75 per hour.

However, even as the experiment in educational consumerism gains increased acceptance among parents

and school administrators in urban areas where it has had a year or two to work through early kinks, many children already have been left behind.

A report by State Comptroller Dan Hynes' office, citing statistics from the Illinois State Board of Education, notes that because of a lack of funds only about 20 percent of students eligible for tutoring received those services. This year, Chicago schools served approximately 57,000 of the 135,000 students eligible for supplemental services.

About 16,000 received

instruction from private vendors, and the rest attended after-school programs.

Downstate schools face a different scenario. In some small schools, where one child's bad day during standardized testing is enough to skew scores, the result could be the opposite of what the law intended.

"Here's what's happening," says Len Defend, superintendent of Cowden-Herrick Community Unit School District 3A in Shelby County. "Schools are going to take their high school buildings, or whichever, in our case it's the high school, and take them off the Title I eligible list." What that means, he says, is that those funds from the federal government targeted toward helping disadvantaged students — and in small high school settings it often translates to tutorial help — will be forfeited so that schools are not forced onto the list of failing schools, and, ironically, required to hire private tutors.



Photograph by Gary Adkins

*Private tutoring companies tout online programs for rural districts, but some may not have the required Internet access.*

services to a particular district. In a rural area, they might have fewer students taking advantage, so the provider's tendency is to not service areas where only one or two students need services."

Online tutoring, she says, often do not fill the gap because small districts may not have the required Internet access.

Nevertheless, thousands of new companies are starting up, pitching their plans to parents fed up with the performance of public schools. Nationwide, districts with failing schools could spend as much as \$2.7 billion on supplemental services and choice options. Districts can use up to 20 percent of federal Title I funds to pay for private tutors. Illinois' share of federal funds for disadvantaged students for 2003-2004 was \$478.8 million.

Currently, private tutoring is an \$8 billion industry that is growing rapidly across the country and expects to tap into those federal dollars. Ed Gordon, a

"It's going to happen," he says. "I've already seen it in neighboring districts."

Urban areas have to deal with hitches, too. Xavier Botana, director of No Child Left Behind Accountability for Chicago Public Schools, says fewer parents than expected signed their children up for tutoring last year. The Chicago school board reallocated the remaining funds and expanded after-school

programs at the 231 schools deemed to be failing. "It was a way for the kids to get what the law actually wanted them to get, which was extended learning opportunities," he says.

The private tutor program did work at James Monroe Elementary School on the city's Northwest Side. Principal James Menconi says everybody — parents, teachers and central office administrators — were "very satisfied." Of the 1,250 students in the school, which is 92 percent Hispanic, about 200 received additional assistance from for-profit tutoring companies. "It helped that everyone had a healthy attitude towards it," he says. "The key was to get across the idea that this extra help was to help the children, to bring them to grade level. It was not punitive in any way."

For the upcoming school year, about 360 schools in the Chicago system will be on the school improvement list, and 270,000 children in those schools will be eligible for tutors and other supplemental education. Botana says this spring the system reached out "more aggressively" to parents about available tutoring services.

In rural Illinois, school districts will have few options to offer their parents and students. Robert Isom, superintendent of Cairo Unit School District 1 at the southern tip of the state, has tried for months to find a private company to serve his schools.

The Cairo district would seem to be what the framers of the No Child Left Behind law had in mind when they designed the tutoring provision: 900 students, about 95 percent black, 87 percent low-income, all receiving free and discounted lunches. The latter two statistics are among the stated criteria to receive Title I federal funds. Cairo has had schools on the state's academic watch and warning lists and has struggled financially for years.

The district awaits its spring test scores, but expects to be on the school improvement list for another year. Isom says he spent the last few months looking for a private tutoring company, but he was disheartened by a common refrain. "When we talked with companies, they wanted to know how much money we had to spend," he says, "rather than asking, 'What are your needs?'"

## TEACHERS' ED

By the 2005-2006 school year, Illinois schools receiving federal funds must prove to the government that all of their teachers are "highly qualified."

To help school districts meet that requirement of the No Child Left Behind law, the Illinois Board of Higher Education has distributed \$5.3 million in federal grants to 15 of the state's universities. The projects are designed to help public schoolteachers educate more effectively, a factor supporters believe is key to meeting the federal and state goals for student achievement. Most grants are aimed at increasing achievement in math and science, a weakness in Illinois schoolchildren.

"There has been a long-term decline in math and science scores on statewide achievement tests in math and science. At the same time, we find many classrooms in math and the sciences staffed by teachers whose academic major was in other fields," says Daniel LaVista, executive director of the Illinois Board of Higher Education. "Moreover, these are two of the disciplines in which teacher shortages are identifiable and troubling. The focus on math and science also addresses the ongoing need for professional development measures to upgrade the qualifications of K-12 teachers in these fields."

One project at Illinois State University in Normal aims to help math teachers in the lower grades. The Teachers Teaching Teachers project, which received \$195,000, will focus on techniques geared to teach children in a way that enables them to learn mathematics. In Decatur, 40 teachers of kindergarten through third grade will learn, then instruct other teachers in a research-based strategy that has proved to be effective. Teachers do an analysis of young students' thinking and then plan instruction based on their findings, says Cheryl Lubinski, professor of mathematics at ISU and co-director of the project with Janet Warfield, assistant professor of mathematics.

The project's approach is a requirement of No Child Left Behind — that schools use scientifically based instruction in the classroom. The

### TIMELINE

#### *When schools don't show progress*

##### YEAR ONE

Schools are placed on state watch status.

##### YEAR TWO

Title I\* schools on the improvement list for two consecutive years must give their students the option of transferring.

##### YEAR THREE

Schools must add such services as private tutors and after-school enrichment programs.

##### YEAR FOUR

Schools also must either extend the school day/year, offer incentives for high quality teachers and/or submit to curriculum modifications.

##### YEAR FIVE

Schools must plan to restructure.

##### YEAR SIX

Schools must restructure, choosing among these options: become a charter school; replace the principal and staff; submit to takeover by an outside management entity or the state. In Illinois, the state may also take such measures as removing a local school board or dissolving a school district.

\*Federal funds for disadvantaged students.



strategy used in Decatur aims to increase skill in solving problems. But Lubinski says children who have been exposed to the type of math instruction used in the project also have shown measurable gains in computation.

"If teachers select numbers carefully," she says, "young students see number relationships and learn their basic facts through problem solving."

With this method, teachers learn how children develop mathematically, says Lubinski. "Teachers can use existing materials, but they learn to use them in very different ways."

Illinois State also received \$270,000 for a project to increase the number of trained teachers in the Chicago school system. The university received three grants in all, totaling nearly \$745,000.

The University of Illinois at Chicago received three grants totaling \$770,000 to work with the Chicago Public Schools. One \$260,000 grant will help math and science teachers receive certification to stay in the classroom. In Illinois a highly qualified teacher is one who is certified in the area she or he is teaching. To be certified, the state requires teachers to have earned a minimum number of hours of college instruction in their field.

Another \$230,000 grant aims to keep qualified teachers in the classroom and increase mentoring of student teachers so that they are prepared to teach low-achieving, inner city students.

"We're learning you need quadruple, quintuple, the amount of support that universities are currently able to give students in high-need schools," says Victoria Chou, dean of the education department and director of the project. A student teacher in Oak Park or the North Shore, she says, will perform well under the normal standard of supervision, which is four to six visits. However, a student teacher working in a school on Chicago's West Side does not have a lot of the same supports and may not have a cooperating teacher in the classroom.

"Someone could visit [that student teacher] every week and it wouldn't be enough," she says. And it's difficult to keep experienced teachers in the classroom without sufficient support. "It's so terribly hard to get the public on board because they think teaching is easy and

dumb people teach," she says. "We have smart people who are just drowning."

Math and science teachers in a mostly Hispanic district in the Quad Cities will get extra help from faculty at Western Illinois University, with \$385,000 that will fund two projects. The largest amount, \$320,000, will help math and science teachers in East Moline and the remainder targets physics instruction.

WIU faculty will help teachers tighten their math and science curriculums so that ninth-graders from five elementary districts will enter United Township High School in the fall more evenly prepared. Math teachers for grades six through 12 also will get intense training in geometry, a subject local research showed was a weakness of those schools, says Donna McCaw, professor of educational leadership at Western and project co-director.

Science teachers will focus on building their knowledge of what they teach and on learning techniques for passing that refreshed subject matter on to at-risk students.

Also, principals will get training in ways to best evaluate and guide math and science teachers. "How do you take a good teacher, through observation and feedback, and make her or him a great teacher," says McCaw.

Educators and administrators welcome the grants and think they will bring the state closer to compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act. However, they are in agreement that this most recent rewrite of education law has unrealistic goals and that Congress will have to make more adjustments to it.

"I think anything that comes from the top down," says Lubinski of Illinois State University, "needs to be assessed."

However, despite the frustrations, teachers admit that no one in government, education or the general public should continue to accept the truth that so many of the nation's children are achieving at unacceptably low levels.

"There are pieces of No Child Left Behind that really stress and stretch [schools], but I think the intent of the law is long overdue," says Western Illinois University's McCaw. "What I tell my classes is that if we had been doing this all along, it wouldn't have had to have been legislated." □

## ***What does No Child Left Behind mean?***

*The No Child Left Behind Act, signed by President George W. Bush in January 2002, is the latest revision of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The specific goals and requirements of the law, which orders sanctions for schools, districts and states that fail to make annual progress, are spelled out in the Federal Register:*

- All students will reach high standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better, in reading and mathematics by 2013-2014.
- By 2013-2014, all students will be proficient in reading by the end of the third grade.
- All limited-English proficient students will become proficient in English.
- By 2005-2006, all students will be taught by highly qualified teachers.
- All students will be educated in learning environments that are safe, drug free and conducive to learning.
- All students will graduate from high school.
- Annual testing of all students against state standards in reading and mathematics in grades three through eight and in science three times in a student's school career, including once in high school. Results must be analyzed and reported.
- All schools are to have highly qualified aides or paraprofessionals.
- Schools must support students not meeting standards and/or all those who have special needs (for example, homeless, limited-English proficiency).

# Transformation

Critics worry Chicago's redevelopment of public housing will leave some residents with nowhere to go

by Curtis Lawrence

*Photograph courtesy of the Chicago Housing Authority*

On a rainy Saturday, Beauty Turner looked around the parking lot outside the last dingy gray high-rise at the north end of the Robert Taylor Homes public housing complex, once the toughest of all Chicago Housing Authority developments.

Like the rest of the buildings at Taylor, the building at 4429 S. Federal will meet the fate of the wrecking ball as part of the CHA's Plan for Transformation, a controversial project to demolish all of its gallery-style high-rises and replace them with new or rehabbed units in mixed-income communities. But on the first Saturday of last month, when many residents received government subsidy checks, 4429 was still very much alive.

Turner, an activist, journalist and a little bit of a social worker when necessary, worked her way through a receiving line of hardened baby-faced lookouts for the building's steady drug trade and disarmed them with a "Hey love, how have you been? How's your mother?" Taylor lived at a nearby building for about 14 years.

Though she moved out a couple of years ago, shortly before her building was demolished, Taylor and the fate of other CHA developments are still a



*The Robert Taylor homes in the late 1960s.*

big part of Turner's life. She is the assistant editor of *Residents' Journal*, a paper written by CHA tenants, which has documented the agency's Plan For Transformation. She also is on the research team of New York's Columbia University sociologist Sudhi Venkatesh, who has written several critiques — most stinging — of CHA's redevelopment plan.

The plan, which CHA Chief Terry Peterson promises will overhaul public housing as Chicagoans have come to know it — a dismal failure — is in its

fifth year now. While Peterson vows to rehab or build new apartments for the 25,000 valid lease holders by the end of the decade, many, including Turner, are skeptical. Even if the CHA pulls off its big plan, they say, thousands more who once lived in the projects legally, but had their leases revoked, will be left out in the cold.

"Behind these walls are a lot of social issues and illnesses that dwell here that have not been looked into for over 40 years," Turner says, before heading up to the fifth floor of 4429 to visit a resident. "So when you tear them down, you're going to have the same problems you had before."

After decades of bad management, corruption and overall poor performance, the federal government took over the city's housing authority for four years ending in late 1999. With a promised \$1.6 billion from the federal government, Mayor Daley has vowed by the end of the decade to replace the projects, many built under his father's watch, with mixed-income communities.

The plan's heart is to create about 7,000 of the 25,000 units in mixed-income developments on the footprint of demolished buildings or in new or remodeled "off-site" units





*The CHA built these low-rise homes to replace part of the Cabrini Green housing project.*

in nearby neighborhoods.

Peterson, a tall sturdy-built man with an earnest charm, has become the CHA's head cheerleader for the monster redevelopment plan. He vows to replace the crime-ridden high-rises, which after years of neglect were plagued by piles of garbage and the stench of urine, with mixed-income communities "where you will have grocery stores, better schools, parks, green space — everything you look for when we move into a community.

"My position has been that those are the same kind of communities where [CHA] residents deserve to live," says Peterson, a former South Side alderman.

Even supporters of the plan acknowledge the challenge is daunting. In public they say Peterson and the city have the right idea in taking down the high-rises. Only off-record — out of fear of offending Daley — will they say they believe it's unrealistic to think the plan can be pulled off by the end of the decade.

The staunchest critics are leery of promises that former CHA residents will be able to return to their revamped communities as promised and say the plan is no more than a smokescreen to turn over valuable real estate to developers.

"What is the social cost of inaction?"

Peterson asks, answering his detractors, who claim the high-rise demolitions moved forward too quickly without a clear plan of where residents would land. "We've seen what the last 40 to 50 years has produced: broken families, a lot of lives lost, a lot of people going to jail.

"Look at what we've been able to do in the four years I've been here," says Peterson. "Look at the fact that we've closed mixed-finance deals." He rattles off projects that have started or are planned to start soon across the city. "Look at the fact that we've been able to relocate 2,800 residents. Look at the fact that we've been able to find jobs for 4,000 of our residents."

Asked to respond to critics' skepticism about the plan, Peterson lays it out, explaining that of the 25,000 units, about 10,000 are reserved for seniors, which leaves about 15,000 units to build or rehab for other families. About 7,000 of those units will be built in the mixed income communities, with nearly 300 of those scheduled to come on line this year.

But Bill Wilen, a lawyer for the Sargent Shriver National Poverty Law Center who represents some CHA tenants, says there are big reasons to be leery of Peterson's optimism.

First, Wilen points out, before demolition began there were 39,000

units of CHA housing. The agency is rebuilding units only for the 25,000 families who were fully compliant with their leases as of October 1, 1999, saying it can no longer be the housing agency of last resort. That leaves about 14,000 families with nowhere to go, according to Wilen.

The CHA contends it can no longer be responsible for those who don't follow rules, including those who commit crimes or fail to pay rent. That's especially true as the federal government moves away from funding subsidized housing.

"They have no right to return to their historic communities," Wilen said last month at a briefing session held by the Coalition to Protect Public Housing, a tenants' rights organization. "They are left out of the process."

Wilen and the coalition also have criticized the CHA for doing a better job of demolishing public housing than replacing it. Under the CHA's plans, the agency will be finished with the demolition of about 21,000 units by the end of 2005. But only 33 percent of the newly constructed units would be completed at that time.

A large number of the newly constructed units, about 2,400, are slated to be completed in 2008 and 2009, Wilen says. "In the last two years of the plan, they're going to do 40 percent of the

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***A large number of the newly constructed units, about 2,400, are slated to be completed in 2008 and 2009.***

construction. Believe that?" Wilen asked participants at last month's briefing.

Others who have criticized the agency for its relocation efforts include former U.S. Attorney Thomas Sullivan, the independent monitor hired by the CHA and tenant leaders to study the plan's implementation over the past two years.

In his first report, delivered last year, Sullivan blasted as a failure the agency's efforts to move residents from the high-rises and integrate them into other communities. He and other critics scolded CHA officials for clearing the high-rise projects only to send residents to "horizontal" ghettos.

Sullivan's report and other similarly critical studies allude to numbers showing that the vast majority of residents moved to poor neighborhoods surrounding their high-rise buildings instead of better neighborhoods or suburbs known in CHA jargon as "opportunity areas."

In the often hurried moves during the first two years of the transformation plan, many residents found themselves separated from their CHA buildings where they had built relationships with neighbors and relied on management services and other support systems that provided a familiar, if not always reliable, routine.

One major problem that plagued residents who moved into rental units was additional household costs, such as utility bills. Some residents could not get electric service in their names because of bills as high as \$22,000

when they lived in their CHA units. Many claimed the bills were erroneous.

While the problem was finally addressed through a program called "CHANCE," in which the CHA and Commonwealth Edison each bore a third of the total debt for selected residents, Sullivan criticized the CHA for dragging its feet through the process.

Turner, who initially broke the story about the utility problems in the 2002 *Residents' Journal*, says the bills are still a problem for some residents. Deidre Brewster, who represents the Coalition to Protect Public Housing, says the bills also continue to confront tenants at the Cabrini-Green development on the near North Side.

Sullivan came down particularly hard on the CHA's efforts to counsel tenants — many using federal housing vouchers — about opportunities in other neighborhoods and about the Service Connector program designed to link residents with social services.

The Service Connector program was CHA's answer to concerns that struggling low- and middle-income neighborhoods would be flooded with former public housing residents unprepared for the transition from their high-rise communities.

His second report, delivered in February, had a more positive tone. He found the agency had slowed the pace of demolitions and the relocation of residents as he had recommended. Demolitions were staggered, allowing for "a more orderly and thoughtful process," Sullivan wrote.

While Service Connector got off to a poor start, Sullivan was impressed with a \$1.1 million increase in funding and the creation of satellite offices in neighborhoods where tenants moved. While the program was more organized and had clearly improved in 2003, Sullivan says there still were tenants who had no contact with their counselors.

Peterson says his agency has been willing to make changes when necessary. He pointed out that the Service Connector budget increased from \$6.5 million the first year to \$20 million this year.

"As we go along, you've got to

remember that nothing of this magnitude has ever been tried before, so there's nowhere to go and look and say, here's a road map," Peterson says.

Back at the 4429 building, Turner listened to a firsthand account from a woman named Mary who had been a squatter at Taylor on and off for 13 years. Mary recounted how the crime has grown more intense in recent months, including the recent stabbing of a young woman by a group of other young women in a dispute over a man. She also told Turner of recent murders.

Turner says the rise in criminal activity is in part because the residents with the most severe social problems are the ones left behind at developments such as Taylor.

In the parking lot, in the shadow of the building where she lived, Turner thought about the late 1980s when, after a failed marriage, she moved into 4525 S. Federal from south suburban Riverdale with three children in tow. She remembered looking out her window at the end of a day of hauling boxes and trying to keep her children entertained.

She saw a pair of teens seemingly playing a flirting game nine stories down from her 10th floor apartment. The boy would kiss the girl, run away, and then return. The last time he ran away from her, "a white car pulled up and about four boys got out and shot that boy up," Turner says.

"It started raining outside, just like today," she says, recalling the long wait for the ambulance. Wailing relatives went to the dying boy, while Turner started jotting down her thoughts.

"The whole community should be crying," she scribbled in what would become the beginning of her journal. "You never know who that boy could have been."

One thing Turner and Peterson agree on is that they want to see big changes in public housing in the state's largest city. The question remains how best to proceed and whether these changes can be made by the end of the decade.

On this recent rainy Saturday at Taylor, the clock was still ticking. □

*Curtis Lawrence is a reporter for the Chicago Sun-Times.*



# History lessons

When a fire starts in a crowded building, nothing happens according to plan

Review essay by James Krohe Jr.

Photographs courtesy of Southern Illinois University Press

In *Gaily Gaily* Ben Hecht recalled a colleague from their days as reporters at the old *Chicago American*. His pal had been up all night covering a bad fire in the Loop and had fallen asleep atop a long table in the back room of a nearby bar.

*Soon after, firemen had discovered fifty more charred bodies in the theater debris. Twenty of the bodies were brought into the saloon and piled on the table where Larry was napping. It was presumed that Larry was one of the corpses previously fetched out of the theater.*

*Larry's awakening and his struggles to crawl out from under a pile of charcoal-black corpses left a curious mark on his character. Thereafter, he felt a chill in his bones, however hot the room or the day. As a result, he always wore his winter overcoat and muffler through the summer.*

Hecht's friend was not the only Chicagoan haunted by memories of the Iroquois Theatre fire of 1903. The Iroquois stood in the Loop on West Randolph just off State. When it opened that fall, it was the latest word in opulence. On December 30, a holiday matinee performance of a popular stage comedy was crammed with a ticket-holder in each of its 1,724 seats, an estimated 200 people standing in the audience and nearly



*The Iroquois Theatre was Chicago's most opulent playhouse when it opened in 1903.*

300 performers and crew. A faulty light on stage ignited some scenery, setting off a firestorm that raced through the brand-new building.

The scenes that ensued are hard to read about, and must have been hell to witness. Bodies in places piled 10 feet

deep. People leaping from the topmost exits to their deaths in an alley below, where the corpses of predecessors cushioned their fall. The screams of the hideously burned as they cried out for death. Parents trying to discern a child's familiar face in what looked like burnt bacon as they toured makeshift morgues. The dead eventually numbered 602 — then and now the highest death toll of any building fire in U.S. history. Two of three victims were female, one in three were children. No wonder there was no blowing of horns at midnight in Chicago on the eve of 1904.

The Iroquois Theatre had been advertised as fireproof, and so it proved. The building was barely damaged by the fire and was quickly reopened under a new name. Its interior fittings, alas, were anything but fireproof. The fire might have been confined to the stage, where it began, long enough that people could have left the building — if the safety systems that were supposed to have been installed for that purpose had worked properly. They did not. The asbestos fire curtain could not be fully lowered because of protruding equipment; skylights installed to vent smoke from the stage had been clamped shut by builders; no hooks were available to pull down flaming scenery before the

## Read all about it

The story is told in *Tinder Box: The Iroquois Theatre Disaster 1903* by Anthony P. Hatch (Academy Chicago Publishers) and in *Chicago Death Trap: The Iroquois Theatre Fire of 1903* by Nat Brandt (Southern Illinois University Press), which includes a useful introduction by historians Perry Duis and Cathryn Schallhorn.

Hatch and Brandt are both veteran journalists. Brandt's is a good book that delves into the "why" of the event — no more lurid than it has to be, if much less angry that it ought to be. Hatch focused on the human side, enlivening the copious press and official accounts with the recollections of five elderly men who had been directly involved in the Iroquois horror: a cub reporter, a fireman, a wire service reporter, a college student who helped carry out the victims, and a child who lived to tell about it after being passed, hand over hand, above the heads of fleeing adults, all of which adds to the immediacy and poignancy of the account, if not to the factual record.

The events of 1958 may be relived through *To Sleep with the Angels: The Story of a Fire* by journalists David Cowan and John Kuenster, published in 1996 by Ivan R. Dee Inc. Based largely on recollections of survivors and their families, it is a moving story of faith that often was not rewarded, and of anger that still festers.

These books are popular histories, and none explicitly examines the ultimate causes of these disasters. Alert readers will be able to draw their own conclusions on the evidence amply presented here about who Chicago's public agencies really work for.

James Krohe Jr.

fire spread.

Even an unconstrained fire needn't have killed so many. In the rush to open the building to holiday theatergoers, fire hoses had not been hooked up to a water supply, nor were axes available to break open locked or stuck doors, as required. Five weeks after it opened, theater staff had not had a fire drill to familiarize themselves with evacuation procedures. Some doors still had no exit signs on them, while other exits were hidden behind draperies. Escape from the gallery to lower floors was barred by padlocked gates installed by management to keep people in the cheap seats from sneaking into more expensive seats in the lower balcony; several outside doors had been likewise locked against gate-crashers.

The shock of the deaths awakened municipalities across the nation to the need to toughen fire safety standards for theaters. Now-standard equipment — a fireproof steel screen across the stage, outward-opening doors, lighted exit signs, sprinklers — became more common in theaters everywhere, in spite of the resistance of owners who liked to boast about the safety of their premises more than they liked to pay for it.

Indeed, by 1958 it was safer to send a child to a matinee in a Chicago movie house than it was to send her to many a local school. No one bragged that Our Lady of the Angels, an aging Roman Catholic grade school on the West Side, was fireproof. In fact, it would have been hard to build a school that was likely to burn more efficiently. Our Lady was built entirely of combustible materials, save for its brick walls. It was only one of dozens, perhaps hundreds, of older schools that had open stairwells, no sprinkler systems, no fire doors on the second floor and fire alarms that rang only inside, not at the local firehouse. When flames raced through Our Lady that winter, 92 children and three nuns died in minutes.

These two fires killed more than twice as many people as did the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. The deaths were as avoidable as they were horrible. Officially, one fire was ruled

an accident, the cause of the other "undetermined," but few independent observers then or now would not conclude that the deaths were crimes, however the fires started.

The provisions made for theatergoers' safety by the owners and managers of the Iroquois were inadequate to the point of irresponsibility, yet the owners blamed the deaths on the victims. It was the patrons' descent into panic, they said, that led to the carnage. Mayor Carter Harrison retorted that people would not have panicked if equipment that was supposed to have been installed to allow their safe and speedy exit had been working.

In the case of Our Lady, the crime was negligence due to the parsimony of church officials and to public officials who catered too eagerly to them. Consider the Alice-in-Wonderland logic of the deputy fire chief who insisted that, although Our Lady was not "actually safe," it was "legally safe" because under the law as it then stood it did not have to comply with the city's municipal code that required the fire safety standards that would have saved the lives of most, if not all, the victims — no doubt a consolation to parents whose children were actually dead.

As it was, the parents had to be content with the thought that their children's deaths helped save others by shaming city officials into requiring automatic sprinkler systems in all wood-frame schools — public and private — two or more stories high, plus improvements in alarm systems. The General Assembly enacted a similar package of safety improvements in the form of the Life Safety Code of 1960.

One would think that fires of this awfulness would be prods to more general reforms, but they were not. The Iroquois Theatre prompted Chicago to improve fire safety in theaters, yes, but not to look at schools; the Our Lady fire forced them to act on school safety, but not to look at the safety of local office buildings or hotels or night clubs — though they too are buildings in which large numbers of people congregate.





*Identifying bodies proved a grim task for victims' families. The downtown theater fire killed 602 people.*

Thus the question since 1903 has been not, "Can a disastrous fire happen again in Chicago?" but "When will a disastrous fire happen again?" The city has come close more than once. In 1993, 20 people died in a fire at the Paxton Hotel that could easily have killed several times that many; people trying to escape that North Side SRO were trapped by burglar bars on the ground floor windows. In 2003, 21 people died in a stampede at the E2 nightspot on the city's South Side. The same factors that caused so many to die at the Iroquois Theatre killed again at the E2 — blocked or locked or unmarked exit doors, overcrowding, untrained staff. Had it been a fire rather than pepper spray that triggered the panic that night, Chicago would have had to endure scenes such as were seen from Rhode Island a few days later when nearly 100 died in a nightclub fire there.

A potentially more dangerous fire broke out eight months after the E2 incident, this time in an upper floor of the 35-story Cook County

Administration Building (the former Brunswick Building) in the Loop. There, a little more than a block from the site of the Iroquois Theatre, six people died of asphyxiation when they were trapped in a smoke-filled stairwell by self-locking doors; the toll might have been grimmer were it not for the fact that, by the time the fire broke out, most workers had already left the building.

Official inquiries into these incidents revealed an essential truth about fire safety plans that was first made plain by the Iroquois fire: When a fire starts in a crowded building, nothing happens according to plan. For example, a disaster plan had been drafted for the Cook County Administration Building, but no one seemed to know about it. No one was quite sure whether security guards or tenants were responsible for unlocking locked stairwell doors when fire broke out, or who ought to issue orders to evacuate. Feeble oversight by the city, which had contributed to the 1903 fire, was again a factor; a retired Chicago Fire

Department official explained that because of a loophole in the city's code, the building's smoke towers — shafts designed to vent smoke outside — had not been inspected for decades.

Time passes. People forget. The publisher of *Tinder Box: The Iroquois Theatre Disaster 1903* states that the fire had the impact in its day that the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center did in ours. In terms of exciting public horror, that may well be true. If so, we must anticipate that a century from now the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center will loom in the public mind no larger than the Iroquois Theatre fire does today, meaning it will be forgotten by all save a few disaster buffs. "The lessons of what happened in Chicago a century ago must not be forgotten — or ignored," writes Anthony Hatch, who wrote that book. But of course they were, a long time ago. □

*James Krohe Jr., a veteran commentator on Illinois public issues, is writing a guide to the state's history and culture for the Illinois Humanities Council.*

# URBAN AGRICULTURE

## *Chicago neighborhoods offer an untapped market for Illinois-grown foods*

by La Donna Redmond

Photographs courtesy of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

Recently, I've come to understand that Chicago could play a new role in the economics of agriculture by providing a market for organic produce.

This realization was the result of personal experience. What started out as a way to understand how to plan healthy meals for my own family ended up being a lesson in the global food system — and where Chicago fits in.

I was forced to study this system to feed my son, who is allergic to dairy products, shellfish, peanuts and eggs. I had to understand how food is produced and processed and labeled. As a result, I have become a peer expert in food availability.

In the end, I discovered that serving our family a "whole foods" diet was best. We limit the use of heavily processed food and try to purchase fresh organic produce and meat whenever possible. But the decision to purchase organic products is a complicated

matter. First, it's not readily available in my community. And it's relatively more expensive than conventional food.

The market for organic food is growing rapidly, but much of this growth is centered in traditional food outlets. The reality is that the organic food industry is increasingly dominated by large companies. Yet continued growth suggests there is an opportunity to redefine organics and push for wider access.

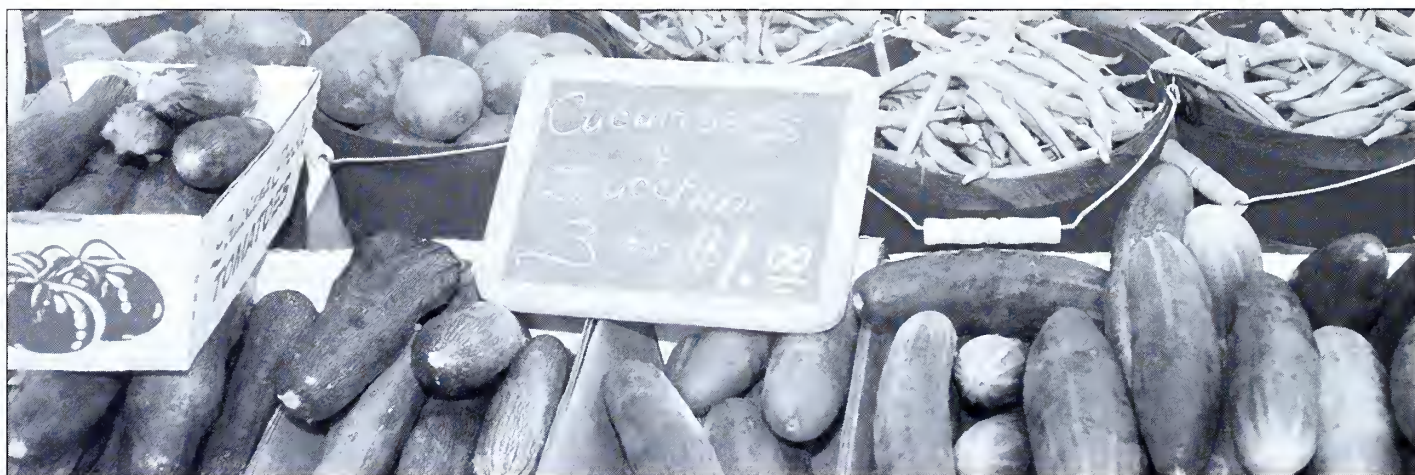
In fact, the economies of rural and urban communities alike can be bolstered when food production is located as close as possible to food consumption. And the availability of organic food can lead to discussions about local food systems. Those systems can be viewed through an economic, social and environmental framework. This framework suggests that some changes have to be made in the contemporary food system to

benefit consumers as well as producers.

The sustainable agriculture community often focuses only on production. However, there are two other important aspects: market economy and social justice. A holistic approach to agriculture production, encompassing urban markets and rural products, embraces all of the principles of sustainability.

Internationally, so-called urban agriculture is an emerging element in the development of food systems. In the United States, tying "urban" and "agriculture" into the same phrase has yet to generate the kind of support it has had around the globe. But urban agriculture should be viewed as an important means for promoting access to foods, access that might not otherwise exist.

Activists in the food justice movement call on farmers, consumers and gardeners to consider the impact of





an ever-increasing global food system. This supports the understanding that there are links among food, the environment and health.

In Chicago, the development of urban agriculture has included farmers' markets and locally controlled grocery stores. And the approaching farmers' market season in Illinois is always an opportunity to see how these sectors interact and where there is room for improvement.

Ideally, farmers will get better prices for their products. And when a community has access to fresh produce, dietary quality will increase and overall community health will improve. However, there are significant barriers in this system that limit Illinois farmers' access to profitable markets and consumers' access to fresh produce.

Chicago's markets, for instance, are filled with farmers from Wisconsin, Indiana or Michigan. Farmers from those states have taken advantage of a growing direct-to-consumer demand for organic products. And, given the proximity of Chicago to those three states, the city offers an obvious market opportunity.

Illinois' farmers' markets could feature Illinois farmers and offer market advantages for them. Yet many farmers' markets have limited appeal to this state's farmers. Barriers to Chicago's markets include everything from bias against traveling

to Chicago to lack of knowledge about the opportunity. Other farmers refuse to compete with food brokers, people who buy produce at auction and resell it at farmers' markets.

A buy-local food campaign in Illinois could connect farmers to markets; clear identification of farm fresh products could help consumers reconnect to fresh produce and the farmers who grow it.

Another significant barrier should be lowered in communities where farmers' markets could fill a need for fresh produce. In many urban communities, access to supermarkets and to fresh produce is limited. This problem is most acute in communities where low-income people live. Farmers could meet the demand in these areas, but farmers' markets have no electronic access so that low-income people can use public benefits.

Further, growing consumer demand for organic produce suggests that the way Illinois views traditional agriculture needs to be expanded. Corn and soybeans will always have a place in Illinois agriculture. However, consumers are saying they want to know their farmers. Consumers want

fresh, local food. There is room within Illinois agriculture for these food systems to co-exist.

An Illinois Food Council could help by conducting an assessment of regional consumer food expenditures to determine the size of possible markets and the potential for Illinois producers.

When we understand the potential of regional food markets, we will be able to assist Illinois producers in developing the capacity to meet local markets, and we will be able to help consumers find locally grown organic products. □

*Photograph courtesy of La Donna Redmond*



*La Donna Redmond*

*La Donna Redmond is the project director for the Chicago Food Systems Collaborative and president of the Institute for Community Resource Development, which coordinated the 2003 Illinois Food Summit. She also is a member of the Illinois Governor's Advisory Council on Agriculture and Family Farms and a 2003 Food and Society fellow, a professional fellowship supported by the Kellogg Foundation. Redmond is on the board of the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture. She can be reached at [songobisi@netzero.net](mailto:songobisi@netzero.net).*



# JAVA JUSTICE

## *A student-run fair trade coalition brews change at Eastern Illinois University*

by Jamie Fetty

Photographs by Eve Astrid Andersson

Central Illinois doesn't seem a likely home for something called a Fair Trade Coffee Coalition. And if the group isn't a cadre of espresso-swallers debating global economics, but an ecumenical force for change effecting worldwide results from a small university, the probability looks even slimmer.

Yet since 2001, the coalition has made serious noise at the 11,000-student Eastern Illinois University campus. A Newman Catholic Center functions as its base camp.

During a protest at the former Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation — better known by its original name, the School of the Americas — Chris Lempa learned more about Fair Trade, a movement to provide living wages and better working conditions for organic farmers in nonindustrialized nations.

Lempa, then a student at EIU in Charleston, read up on Fair Trade and found the movement focuses mostly on coffee because it's the world's second-most heavily traded commodity, after oil. South American farmers who grow Fair Trade-certified coffee make a minimum of \$1.26 per pound, work in a democratic system with a more gender-neutral power balance and farm in ecologically sound ways, he learned. Millions of farmers depend on coffee for income,

and Fair Trade aims to make that a less desperate existence.

"A lot of these things will just tell you about a problem and educate you about a problem, but what was so cool about Fair Trade and what was special was that they were saying, 'Here's a problem,' and also, 'Here's a solution,'" Lempa says.

Roy Lanham, campus minister at the Newman Center, pledged to help the students while letting them decide the direction of the coalition.

"When the opportunity came to start Fair Trade, the Newman Center was the logical place to do that," Lempa says. "There are no other hot spots on campus for any sort of activism."

The movement created at EIU may be unique to Illinois universities. The University of Illinois at Chicago was home to a Fair Trade effort for about a year, but the chapter shut down in 2002. Chapters exist at Saint Louis University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, according to *GlobalExchange.org*. Beyond that, the EIU clan knows only of a movement under way at Loyola University-Chicago.

In the coalition's first year, members worked to involve as much of the campus as possible in the primary goal: a campuswide switch to Fair Trade-certified coffee.

University officials didn't seem to take the coalition seriously at first, Lempa says, but persistence and some help from Lanham paid off.

"They probably thought we were a flavor of the week. Idealistic kids are always there, protesting the war or talking about fair trade or sweat shops," he says. "But they saw we mean business and eventually started talking to us."

The students did convince the EIU administration to switch all coffee service in the student union, which is 90 percent of all coffee service on campus, to Fair Trade-certified.

EIU agreed to switch because of a vested interest in both social justice and listening to students, says Mark Hudson, EIU's director of housing and dining.

At first, a local coffee shop owner was hired to operate a shop called Java B & B in the school's Martin Luther King Jr. University Union. The shop carried a Fair Trade-certified line of coffee, contracting exclusively with Seattle's Best Coffee.

A cup of Fair Trade-certified coffee at the shop cost 12 cents more than a regular cup. To shave off the price difference, coalition members gathered near the shop to hand out informational cards and 13 cents to anyone who agreed to buy Fair Trade instead.

Fair Trade members also staked out





Coleman Hall, one of the most high-traffic academic buildings at the university, to hand out free cups of Fair Trade-certified coffee and encourage students and faculty to buy it at Java B & B.

Now, all the Seattle's Best lines at Java B & B, which has been operated by the university since early 2003, are Fair Trade-certified.

Hudson says while the actual cost of Fair Trade coffee used in the union is slightly higher, the Fair Trade distributors agreed to provide equipment.

The goal of converting all coffee served on campus to Fair Trade-certified turns out to be more difficult than the organizers envisioned, but Lempa says it remains "something we hope to see accomplished in all our lifetimes."

It turned out that students eating in campus dining halls didn't drink much coffee, Lempa says. What's more, EIU doesn't serve real coffee in the dining halls, but something called "liquid coffee," a cocktail of coffee bean extract, chemicals and water.

But the group found other goals to pursue. The coalition pushed Jackson Avenue Coffee, another local shop, to carry a Fair Trade line, which it sells a few days each week, says Jen Price, who took the group's reins from Lempa after his graduation. The local

County Market also agreed to start carrying Fair Trade-certified coffee.

The coalition has shifted focus to education. This year it launched the first-ever ECHOfest, an acronym for Everyone Can Help Out. "We wanted to create a forum to discuss student involvement, provide access to information, to open their eyes to opportunities that are on campus and to create positive change," says current co-leader Holly Henschen.

The coalition still has not reached its original goal of converting the entire campus to Fair Trade coffee, but has raised consciousness on a campus often accused of being activism-challenged.

"It didn't happen as well as we thought, but in its third year now, Fair Trade has raised the issue to awareness on this campus," Lanham says. "It's a credit to the university that they were listening to students. The 'big, bad institution' listened and said, 'let's do this.'" □

*Jamie Fetty, a recent EIU graduate, is a former editor of the Daily Eastern News.*



*Pictured at left are ripening beans at a Guatemalan coffee estate. The images are from the photographer's Web site, [evandersson.com](http://evandersson.com).*

## Vince Demuzio

Even on his deathbed, as he slipped in and out of lucidity, the dean of the state Senate was talking politics, arguing with former lawmaker Dawn Clark Netsch. It was 2 a.m. in the last few days before he died of colon cancer on April 27. Netsch wasn't there to participate in the debate, but she heard the story later.



Vince Demuzio

she knew he would be walking beside her as she continued to rally for the causes that were most important to him, such as education.

Morris, a former Waukegan mayor, calls Demuzio "one of the great orators in the Senate." Demuzio would speak with such great passion on an issue that "you'd listen and think he'll

never make it if he doesn't get his way. And then there would be a vote [that didn't go his way] and he'd just move right on.

"He'd get knocked down and he'd get right back up," says Morris, who points to one of the toughest punches: being replaced as state Democratic Party chairman by Gary LaPaille, an associate of House Speaker Michael Madigan. "He got over it in weeks. They became friends again. I'm still not over it.

"He lost some big battles. But he never lost faith in the system."

Senate Republican leader Frank Watson remembers Demuzio just as those within his party do: as an independent thinker who wasn't afraid to challenge a wrong, a man who had great respect for the institution of the General Assembly and the lawmaking process.

Independent though he was, Demuzio was a tough politician who looked out for the home district. Netsch recounts this joke: "Macoupin County had sunk under two-and-a-half feet of concrete."

Morris says Demuzio, a true watchdog, saw his job as looking out for the average guy.

And he was a mentor, teaching the system to less experienced downstate lawmakers — and others. Some of his disciples included David Wilhelm, former Democratic National Committee chair and campaign manager for President Bill Clinton, and U.S. Rep. Rahm Emanuel, a

Chicago Democrat.

Demuzio loved to talk to reporters, too. He had just as much time for the interns as he did staff members at the *Chicago Tribune* or the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. "Vince would sit for hours with these kids and answer any questions they might have," says Morris.

Perhaps the biggest loss in Demuzio's death is that of a powerful voice for downstate Illinois. Netsch says Demuzio once called the Illinois Gore campaign and a young worker who answered the phone asked the senator who he was. His reply, says Netsch, "You — expletive deleted — he's the guy who's gonna carry your candidate downstate."

Some say he was gruff. But there are folks familiar with Demuzio's sense of humor who don't see it that way. "He loved being thought of as a tough, mean guy, but of course he didn't fool anybody," Netsch says.

"He was all bark and no bite, a loveable curmudgeon," says Morris, who is now a Chicago investment banker living in Lindenhurst. "Vince would hold court in his office behind the chambers. There was no 'How are you?' with him. He'd say, 'What do you want?' And then he'd pull you over close to him and say, 'Is everything OK?'"

In his final days, Demuzio monitored Senate activity via the Internet, too ill to make it to the chamber in person. But he made the trip to Springfield to pay homage to another former Senate majority leader, the late Stan Weaver.

"He was terribly, terribly loyal, and that's also a trait that seems to be missing in American politics," says Morris. "He was the last of a breed," Morris says of Demuzio's coalition-building ability. "He would have been there another 20 years.

"I think it's [Demuzio's death] going to be a blow to Illinois government as a process. His gift of being a whip is unique, and it's going to be tough to replace that."

In a more clear-headed state, Demuzio asked his wife to reach Netsch, a fellow independent Democrat and member of the Crazy Eight — a band of young lawmakers who in 1975 held up the vote on Senate leadership until they won positions of power for women, minorities and downstaters. Netsch was one of Demuzio's many friends to visit in those final days.

So was Bill Morris, another Crazy Eight. Demuzio took time, though he knew his death was near, to ask about Morris' son and wife.

Demuzio was the last of the Crazy Eight to serve in the legislature and the first to die.

At the time of his death, which occurred just a week before what would have been his 63rd birthday, Demuzio was Illinois' longest-serving senator. A veteran of nearly 30 years, he had unparalleled skills as a mentor and coalition-builder. The Carlinville Democrat and Senate majority leader also was a former chairman of the state party. So his death hit Springfield hard.

Gov. Rod Blagojevich, not long before, had issued an executive order renaming the stretch of Interstate 55 between Carlinville and Springfield Vince Demuzio Expressway. It would be difficult to find someone who had driven the stretch more often. Demuzio traveled home to Carlinville after the conclusion of each day's legislative business.

His wife Deanna, who now fills his seat in the Senate, said that, although she would never be able to fill his shoes,



## Ralph Dunn

The retired Republican legislator from southern Illinois died May 3. He was 90.

"There was no better friend of southern Illinois than Ralph Dunn," said Senate Republican Leader Frank Watson in a printed statement. "He will truly be missed by all those who knew him — and those who are enjoying the fruits of his labor."

Dunn's major concerns included the coal industry and developments at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. "He made every phone call necessary, wrote every letter and made every appearance to get the job done," stated Watson of Greenville.

A real estate investor from DuQuoin, who was active in GOP politics, Dunn was elected to the House in 1973 and moved over to the Senate in 1985, where he served another decade.

The Pinckneyville native also was a delegate to the 1968 Republican National Convention and to the Illinois Constitutional Convention of 1969-1970.

## Anthony Scariano

The retired appellate court judge and former Democratic state representative died April 17. He was 86.

"One of the things that everyone will always remember — apart from his integrity — was this great, good spirit. It was tough sometimes, even for those he was opposed to, to get very angry," says former state comptroller and legislator Dawn Clark Netsch.

Scariano, a former assistant U.S. attorney, targeted problems in the racing industry, which he regulated as chair of the Illinois Racing Board under then-Gov. Dan Walker. "He wasn't intimidated by anybody," says Netsch, who recalls "some pretty good fights."

Netsch says Scariano's service earned him respect for his "commitment that government has a responsibility to assist people who need help, economically and every other way."

He went to the General Assembly in 1956 from the south suburbs.

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## LETTERS

### Medical liability insurance and lawyers

I have been following the public proclamations of a "medical liability crisis" from the very start as a personal conviction that the American medical system is not functioning as desired. *Illinois Issues* does a better job of addressing public issues than television and newspapers, and hope was kindled as I glanced at the title of Bethany Carson's article "Code Blue" (see April 2004, page 22). Alas, disappointment still reigns.

Ms. Carson will not find any answer to the "crisis" by looking into the political system. The political system is not meant to solve problems, but is always being manipulated to gain or maintain power or advantage. At this moment, I could care less about what position the Republicans or Democrats are espousing. Their job is only to find a majority to vote on some bill, and often that majority is not

in the public interest.

When is a consideration of the public good and the people going to be entertained? I have not seen any information that makes me confident that the people of Illinois are being properly served by the leadership of our business or political community. The operating principle of our economy, our politicians and business leaders is greed, selfishness and self-righteous egotism, and none of these concepts is good for our society.

This writer is fed up with price gouging, corporate bribes, political bribes [and] legal bickering that pads the gross take of lawyers for both the plaintiff and defendant.

Where is our decency and our consideration of the public welfare? Where is an objective statement of this claim of "crisis"? Where is an evaluation of the legitimacy of claims from either side? Who is telling the truth? Who has the most to gain, or lose?

Where are the reporters who should be doing their civic duty to ask the right questions for the good of our people?

If there is a "medical liability crisis," then the public deserves to hear the evidence, and I expect *Illinois Issues* to provide some sound, documented analysis, historical perspective, data collection and verification. After a thorough and thoughtful presentation, all of us may feel more comfortable in suggesting a course of action.

**Richard Worthen**  
Alton

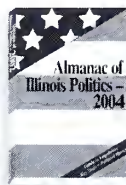
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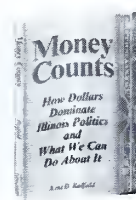
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Charles N. Wheeler III



## Entrusted with government in Springfield, the Democrats blew it

by Charles N. Wheeler III

A behavioral ecologist might see an uncanny resemblance to a struggle for alpha male status in a pack of timber wolves. Political scientists and headline writers prefer a titanic clash of egos to determine who's the No. 1 Democrat in Illinois.

Whatever one's frame of reference, the failure of the state's Democratic leadership to produce a budget on time for the coming fiscal year is clearly a source of considerable embarrassment for the party faithful.

Entrusted by voters with the reins of government in Springfield just two years ago, Democrats blew it. Despite a governor and majorities in both legislative chambers, the party was unable to craft a spending plan for FY 2005 by the May 31 deadline. Now, the dysfunctional Democrats must call on responsible Republicans to keep state government going for the next 12 months because, come June 1, the Constitution requires a three-fifths majority vote in both the Senate and the House to enact the budget.

The party's titular leader, Gov. Rod Blagojevich, places blame for the debacle squarely on the doorstep of House Speaker Michael Madigan.

Everything would have been peachy had Madigan and other Democratic lawmakers simply rubber-stamped the spending plan the governor laid out in February or the modified version cobbled together by Blagojevich and Senate President Emil Jones in the waning

*The party's titular leader,  
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hours of Memorial Day.

But the speaker — at heart a fiscal conservative — was genuinely concerned about the huge spending increases and the dubious borrowing and revenue-raising schemes Blagojevich set out. And no doubt he grew tired of seeing the governor treat the legislature — an institution to which Madigan has devoted most of his adult life — as his personal piñata, to whack around at will. So a refresher course in Government 101, the part about there being three, co-equal branches of government, might have seemed in order.

Whether the governor sets aside his cudgel for an olive branch is anybody's guess, and as long as the stalemate is resolved before early July — when it would start to impact the lives of everyday Illinoisans — the egg on the Democrats' collective faces should cause

the party no permanent damage.

But once a final budget deal is reached, a couple of points seem clear:

- Because the need for extraordinary majorities makes Republican leaders Sen. Frank Watson and Rep. Tom Cross equal partners in the budget-making process, the budget will reflect Republican priorities more than would an all-Democratic plan. So expect less overall spending and smaller tax and fee increases than Blagojevich wanted and Senate Democrats approved.

- Whatever the final mix of revenue enhancements — tax hikes, fee increases, bond sales, raids on treasury accounts earmarked for uses other than general operations, and accounting gimmickry — lawmakers will face the same challenge a year from now. The underlying problem is not amenable to such one-time, stop-gap, Band-Aid solutions, as the gradual unraveling of the state's current financial plan illustrates.

To help close a projected \$5 billion budget deficit and bankroll nearly \$1 billion in new general funds spending, Blagojevich and lawmakers last year approved a similar hodge-podge of new and higher taxes and fees, unprecedented borrowing, sales of state-owned property and draining earmarked funds into the state's checkbook account. In the last 11 months, however, significant portions of the administration's fiscal house of cards have collapsed, punching huge holes in the supposedly balanced FY 2004

budget. Among the major difficulties:

- Legal problems attendant to the awarding of the 10th riverboat casino license cost Blagojevich \$350 million he was counting on for the current year. The license money probably won't be available in FY 2005, either.
- Mortgaging the Thompson Center in Chicago for \$200 million faltered when the attorney general opined that three-fifths legislative majorities were needed to authorize such long-term debt, a margin the plan failed to garner in the Senate.
- A federal judge blocked an attempt to siphon into the general funds \$125 million from an environmental trust fund.
- Higher taxes on existing riverboats are now projected to bring in \$100 million less than anticipated a year ago.
- A plethora of new and increased fees is likely to fall at least \$70 million — perhaps more — short of estimates, and that's assuming the underlying legislation survives a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of raising fees on certain businesses beyond regulatory

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***The governor continues to rule out what many thoughtful people see as a reasonable approach, a temporary income or sales tax increase.***

costs, then using the excess to pay day-to-day government operating expenses.

The revenue shortfall might be offset by a huge jump in federal aid — \$1.2 billion more through May — due chiefly to a temporary hike in Medicaid reimbursement rates and a \$422 million windfall in federal grants, both part of the tax cut package Congress approved last year.

Even were all those one-time revenues available to cover FY 2004 bills, an equal amount of new dollars would be needed from somewhere else just to stay even in FY 2005, much less spend more as

Blagojevich wishes.

The governor, meanwhile, continues to rule out what many thoughtful people — including the presidents of the AFL-CIO and of the Illinois Chamber of Commerce — see as a reasonable approach, a temporary income or sales tax increase. One excellent suggestion comes from the Taxpayers' Federation of Illinois, which in March coupled a proposed temporary income tax surcharge with a call for a Task Force on State Revenues, which the federation said should "study possible changes in state tax policy that would promote economic growth and adequate funding of government services."

Until such constructive ideas take root, budget-making won't get any easier as the governor and the legislature continue to skirt the underlying problem — a revenue structure that does not generate enough money to pay for the goods and services the politicians want to provide. □

*Charles N. Wheeler III is director of the Public Affairs Reporting program at the University of Illinois at Springfield.*

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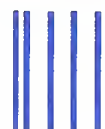
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Rhonda C. Thomas	Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal LLP	Chicago	(312) 876-8966	Public Finance Law

**KEY:**  
Fed Regulatory = Federal Regulatory Law; Gov/Muni/Lobby/Admin = Governmental/Municipal/Lobbying & Administrative Law

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